



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

P27

Chap. Copyright No.

Shelf

J28

C

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



CLOVER BEACH

FOR
BOYS AND GIRLS.

By MARGARET VANDEGRIFT, *pseud.*

AUTHOR OF "COMMON SENSE IN THE HOUSEHOLD," "ANCIENT HISTORY,"
"THE DEAD DOLL," AND "CATCHING THE CAT."

margaret J. Janvier



CHICAGO:
W. B. CONKEY COMPANY,
PUBLISHERS,

PZ 7
J 28
C

36492



Library of Congress
TWO COPIES RECEIVED
AUG 20 1900
Copyright entry
June 11, 1900
No. *A. 14467*
SECOND COPY.
Delivered to
ORDER DIVISION,
AUG 22 1900

68333

COPYRIGHT BY PORTER & COATES, 1880.
COPYRIGHT, 1900, BY W. B. CONKEY COMPANY.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH EVERY ONE IS INTRODUCED	PAGE 9
--	-----------

CHAPTER II.

A LITTLE MISUNDERSTANDING	29
---------------------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

A LITTLE MISUNDERSTANDING—CONCLUDED	53
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

CLEAR WEATHER AGAIN.....	69
--------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

A FESTIVAL WEEK.....	90
----------------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

THE CLAMBAKE	114
--------------------	-----

CHAPTER VII.

THE CLAMBAKE—CONCLUDED	125
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

A LITTLE CLOUDY AGAIN.....	154
----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER IX.

	PAGE
THE PICNIC	170

CHAPTER X.

THE BEGINNING OF A STORY, AND END OF THE PICNIC	183
---	-----

CHAPTER XI.

THE PASSENGERS, AND THE END OF THE STORY	201
--	-----

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. HEATH'S STORY, AND A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.....	224
---	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. HEATH'S STORY—CONTINUED.....	252
-----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

A PERHAPS THAT CAME TRUE, AND ANOTHER STORY, AND THE END	272
--	-----



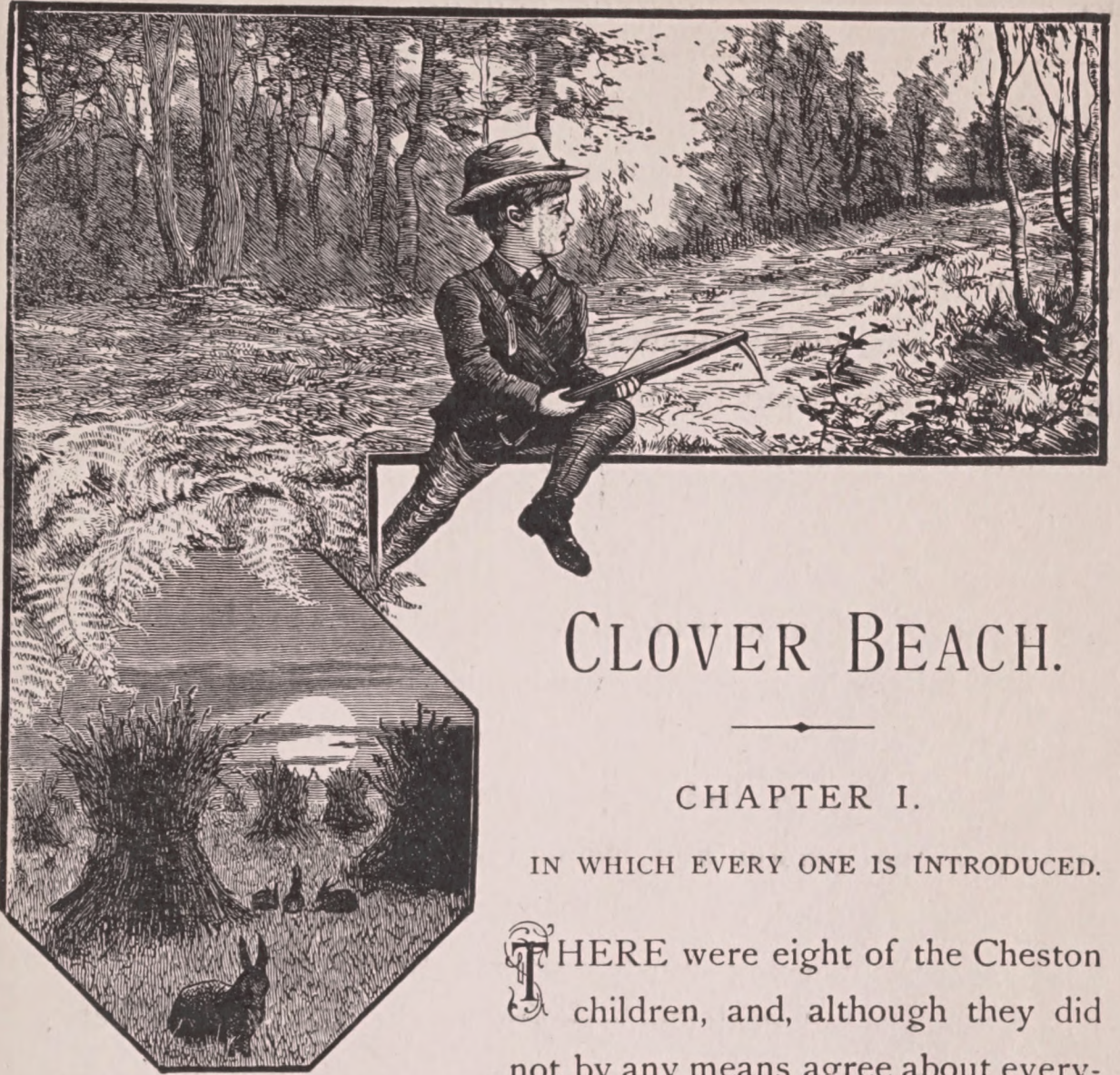


ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE CHILDREN ON THE BEACH.....	<i>Frontispiece.</i>
"THEY ROCKED AND PLAYED IN THE BOAT".....	13
"LINA HAD TAKEN A FAMILY OF FOUR DOGS".....	17
"IT WAS THEIR OWN DANDY, AND NOBODY ELSE".....	23
POLLY, ROB AND DANDY.....	26
"SISTER, PLEASE LEND ME A PENCIL AND PIECE OF PAPER".....	31
"KITTY, POLLY, AND DICK SURROUNDED HIM".....	35
"HIS MEDICINE WAS ADMINISTERED AT SHORT INTERVALS".....	39
"THE BOYS LAID DETAINING HANDS ON DICK".....	43
"POLLY, ROB, AND THE BABY PRACTISED JUMPS".....	47
"NORA WAVED HER HANDKERCHIEF TO TOM".....	51
"NORA WAS SITTING BEFORE THE ROUGH EASEL".....	55
"ON THIS HORSE ROB TOOK MANY A LONG JOURNEY".....	59
"DICK WAS EQUIPPED WITH A HUGE SOLDIER-CAP".....	63
"KITTY WAS ABSORBED IN A DOMINO-HOUSE".....	71
"THE LITTLE DUCK ATE OUT OF THE SILVER SPOON".....	79
"PUT YOURSELF IN HIS PLACE".....	83
"POLLY WAS STANDING ON A CHAIR".....	87
"MARTHA BROUGHT HER MENDING-BASKET OUT".....	93
ROB AND POLLY GATHERING WILD ROSES.....	103
"A TINY WHITE-AND-GRAY KITTEN CONFRONTED THEM".....	109
"ONE OF THE FOXES HAD THE CAT'S TAIL IN HIS GRIP".....	117
"MASTER ROB, TAKEN BY SURPRISE, TURNED A BACK SOMERSAULT".....	123

"THE OLD FISHERMAN AND HIS SON".....	129
"DICK SUPERINTENDED AND CHEERED THE OPERATION".....	133
"THERE WAS A CAT TANGLED IN THE HARNESS OF A DOLL'S WAGON".....	137
"BESSIE TRYING TO COAX STUMPS AND TRIPOD TO EAT OUT OF THE SAME PLATE.....	144
"SHE STOOD COURAGEOUSLY FACING A LARGE BEETLE".....	151
"I'LL GO AWAY IF YOU DON'T WANT ME TO HEAR, NORA".....	155
POLLY SHAKING HANDS WITH THE LITTLE DOGS.....	158
"A LAMB LYING APPARENTLY DEAD".....	163
"THE SAIL-BOAT MADE QUICK TIME TO THE ISLAND".....	172
"DICK THREW HIMSELF ON THE GRASS AND FELL ASLEEP".....	176
"I MADE IT STOP SUCKING ITS THUMB".....	179
ALICE CARRYING THE DOVE HOME.....	195
"THREE LITTLE SQUIRRELS FRISKED OVER THE CAT'S BACK".....	203
"RUTH PATIENTLY HELD THE CAGE UPON HER LAP".....	216
"DICK, ROB, POLLY, AND TOM PICKED INDUSTRIOUSLY".....	217
"THE CHILDREN'S HEARTS WERE SADDENED BY FINDING A DEAD BIRD".....	221
MRS. HEATH RELATING THE STORY OF EFFIE'S MEMBERSHIP.....	225
"COME, LITTLE MISSY, OR YOU'LL NOT GET THIS TRAIN".....	233
"THE CHILDREN'S DAY".....	239
"SHE KNELT WITH HER LITTLE BEDFELLOW AT THE KIND MATRON'S KNEE".....	255
"POLLY FLEW TO LINA AND CAUGHT HER HAND".....	266
"THERE STOOD A GIRL WITH A KITTEN ON HER SHOULDER".....	269
"SHE BUNDLED ME UP WARMLY AND I SET OUT".....	275
"A LITTLE BOY WAS STANDING BY THE FENCE".....	276
"THE HALF-FROZEN BIRDS HOPPED CLOSE TO HER FEET".....	277
"I SAW SEVERAL BOYS SKATING ON A POND".....	279
"ON BEING LET IN HE ACTED SINGULARLY".....	283





CLOVER BEACH.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH EVERY ONE IS INTRODUCED.

THERE were eight of the Cheston children, and, although they did not by any means agree about every-

thing, they did agree, without a dissenting voice, in saying that that was exactly the right number of children for one family. It was enough for any sort of round game, particularly if mamma and papa could be induced to join them, and it was enough to divide into several games if the eight could not possibly agree upon one.

Lina and Charlie were twins, and were the oldest. They were

fourteen years old at the time of which I am writing, and were beginning to feel a little grown-up. Next came Dick, then Nora, then Kitty, then Rob, then Polly, and, last of all, little Tom, who was only three years old, and was petted and played with by everybody. He was another point of agreement: there was not one of them who contradicted the proposition, made at short intervals by different members, that he was "just the dearest baby that ever lived."

The younger children had nicknamed Lina and Charlie "Substance and Shadow." Charlie, being an upright and downright young man, who did not see, just yet, why his beliefs and opinions were not as good as those of people who had been in the world three or four times longer than he had, was Substance; and Lina, being a rather dreamy young person, and inclined to follow Charlie's lead in a deliberate and absent-minded manner, had earned her name of Shadow without using much exertion to do so. The rest of them were a good deal like many other civilized children between the ages of twelve and three: they were extremely fond of each other, and desolate when separated; but as all were healthy, honest, and strong-willed, there was a good deal of what they called "discussion" perpetually going on between them.

Clover Beach had become a second home to them, and a suggestion that any other summer resort could be a tenth part as desirable would have been received with an unanimous howl of dissent. They usually took possession on the first of June, and gave it up

when the weather became too cold for comfort there; so their return to their city home was, as Lina said, a "movable fast." The cottage which they annually filled stood in the corner of a farm owned by a long-suffering farmer named Denison, whose wife, being a worthy helpmeet, took a contract to board them all; and I think they never lost a sort of festive feeling of being invited somewhere as they left the cottage for the short walk to the great "best kitchen" of the farm-house, where they took their meals. There were no other boarders, so they had the table quite to themselves, and the exercises were delightfully varied, on stormy days, by the appearance at the cottage of Mr. Denison disguised in an oil-skin coat and a "sou'-wester," and bringing the meals in a huge basket: this was equal to a picnic almost, and came very near making up for a day's imprisonment.

Clover Beach was no barren stretch of sand, with the fact that it was a beach for its sole recommendation. No: if you had looked only at the great oaks, the deep, rich grass, and the bright wild flowers which surrounded the house, you would never have guessed that you were near the sea unless you had a nose, and then you could not have helped guessing it. I wonder if you have ever smelled a sea-breeze which has come straight across a field of blossoming clover? I do hope you have.

The farm-house and cottage were a quarter of a mile from the beach, but then, as if to compensate for this, the loveliest river, with great pine trees on either bank, ran softly to the sea not a hundred

yards from the wide back piazza. The chief beauty of this river, at least in Mrs. Cheston's opinion, was, that although it was nearly half a mile wide just here, it was so shallow that an upset out of one of the half dozen boats which the family owned meant nothing more serious than standing on the bottom of the river—which was, unfortunately, rather muddy—until the boat was righted. But to the children its chief beauty was, that although it was really so shallow, it didn't look so: as they rocked and played in the boats they could look through its mouth straight out to sea, and “pretend” almost anything in the way of limitless voyages and frightful adventures, from Sindbad the Sailor and Robinson Crusoe to the Swiss Family Robinson and Young Marooners.

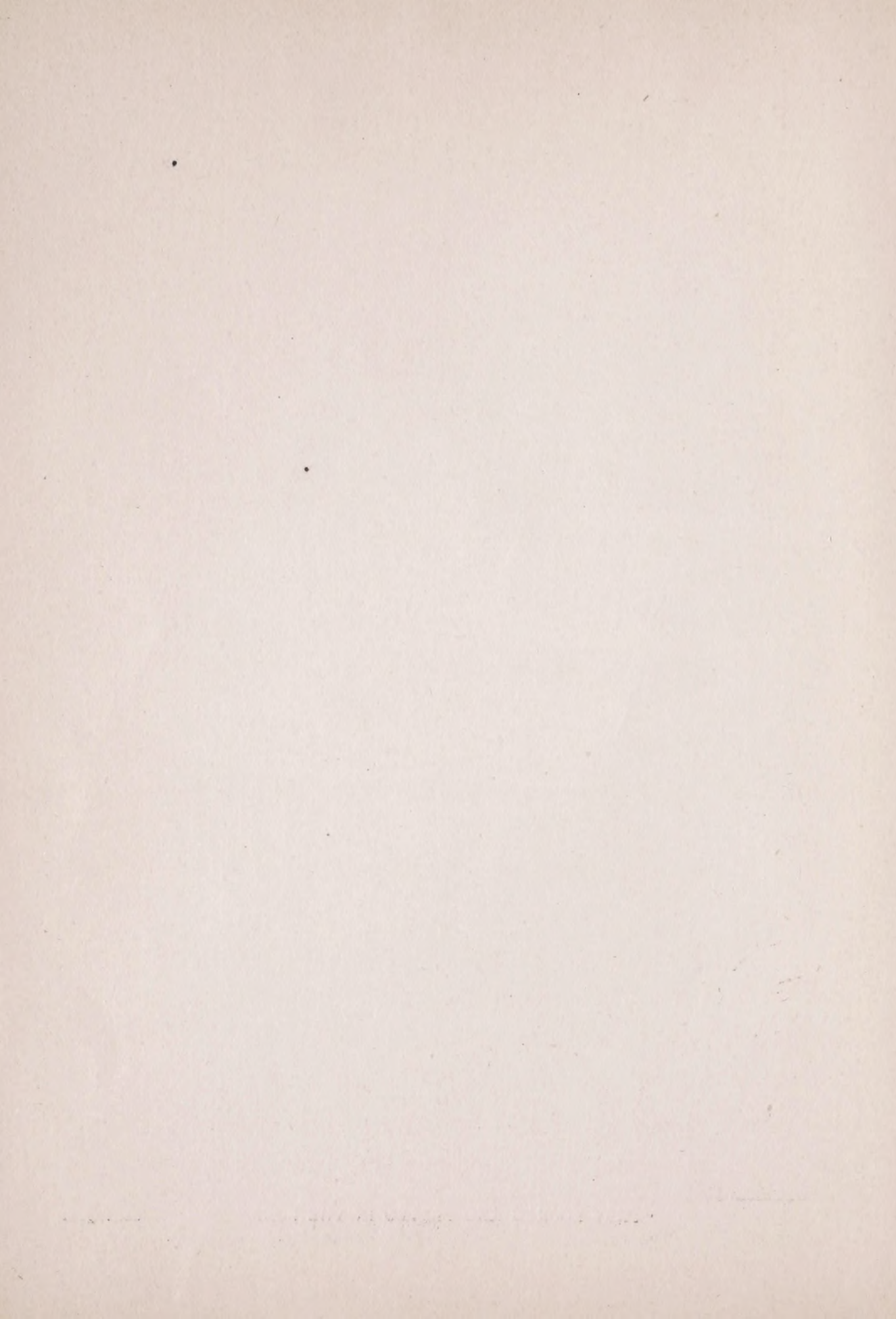
Nobody took many clothes to Clover Beach. A stout blue flannel suit apiece for common, which had to be very stout indeed, and some sort of decent woollen dress for Sunday wear, were all any one needed in the way of outside garments, for there was always a pleasant freshness in the air, which made woollen fabrics the only comfortable clothing; and Mrs. Cheston saved the mangled remains of one summer's blue flannels until the next, which prevented the painful necessity of sending anybody to bed or putting him into his best clothes while his common ones were dried.

This summer of which I am writing was to be a little different from past summers. Mr. Cheston's business had failed to yield the usual income for some time, and, he was a firm believer in the statement that



"THEY ROCKED AND PLAYED IN THE BOAT."

See Page 12.



"If you can't raise up your lot to your mind,
You can bring down your mind to your lot."

He had warned his wife and children before leaving home that they would have to "take in sail a little," not thinking it worth while to mention that his sail had already been shortened by a mended dust-coat instead of a new one, several pairs of half-soled boots and shoes, and a somewhat liberal patronage of a scouring and dyeing establishment.

"We are not going to give up Clover Beach, are we, papa?" asked Lina anxiously; at which suggestion there was a seven-fold groan.

"No," said Mr. Cheston. "I think we can manage it—*if*," he emphasized as he saw symptoms of a cheer, "everybody will help pull."

"Oh, we will! we will!" said everybody rapturously.

"My last year's blue flannel is perfectly good, mamma," said Lina.

"And you're only grown about a foot," suggested Charlie mischievously.

"I don't want a single best clothes, mamma," exclaimed Dick virtuously; at which everybody laughed, for if there was anything that Dick especially abhorred it was his Sunday suit.

"Mamma must settle about your clothes," said Mr. Cheston; "that is her lookout, and I have perfect confidence in her judgment. It is something much more serious which you have to de-

cide. We have always been able to take Martha and Sally, but if we go this year we must leave them at home; which will mean that Lina must help mamma with you youngsters and with the sewing, and that Charlie must take his share of looking after the small boys. And I will also mention that we can't hire a sail-boat once a week; but the best part of Clover Beach will still be left, and some of you can understand what Jean Ingelow meant when she said,

"The dews of blessing heaviest fall
Where care falls too."

The children had grown quiet as Mr. Cheston spoke, but now, when he said more cheerfully, "All in favor of going as poor travellers hold up their hands!" every hand went up, and the suppressed cheer came out with a force which suggested that it had grown stronger by keeping.

There were many talks, after that, between Mrs. Cheston and the children, for they had all agreed "not to worry poor papa" about anything; they knew he felt curtailing any of their pleasures much more than they felt having them curtailed. Lina had anticipated taking the family of four dogs which she lodged and boarded in the coach-house at the foot of the small city garden with her that summer; she had a very tender heart toward animals, and these dogs—which were all, Charlie assured her, "pure mongrels"—had been rescued from the street under various circumstances which made them dear to her heart. But she knew that their transportation alone



would cost more than her small purse held, and it would not be right to feed such a family at Mrs. Denison's expense. She had meant to ask for an appropriation for the purpose, for the children were not denied a reasonable pleasure when consent was possible; and she had anticipated with keen delight the rambles and scampers through wood and field attended by three faithful squires. The fourth "inmate" was a forlorn but loving puppy, picked up only a few days before, and, the children thought, already manifesting promise of rare intelligence and fidelity. So poor Lina, after a tender and solemn interview with Major, Dandy, Floss, and Dot in the coach-house, during which she decided that Dot, on account of his utter helplessness, must be her choice, announced to her mother with a trembling voice that she was going to give away the other three, and that she thought there would be scraps and bones enough from their table to feed Dot, and she could take him in her lap during the journey. Her mother kissed her fondly, for they had talked over the pleasure of having the dogs that summer, and quite agreed that four dogs were none too many for eight children. But Mrs. Cheston knew that spoken sympathy would be very apt to bring tears, so she only said cheerfully: "Then I suppose you will give Floss and Major to the little Cramptons, and I will ask papa to inquire among his friends for a good master for Dandy."

The little Cramptons were the children of a neighbor, and they had often, with more candor than politeness, begged Lina for "one

or two of her dogs," remarking, after each refusal, that she was "real mean when she had so many."

They, too, went to the country every summer, and the offer of Floss and Major was met with shrieks of delight and gratitude. Mrs. Crampton herself called to thank Lina, for, she said, she hoped the children would not be for ever asking her what to play if they had two dogs to play with; and she assured Lina that she might "feel easy" about her pets, for they should be well fed and cared for. She added a few words of such warm praise for Lina's generosity that Lina, with a bright blush, owned frankly that there was no generosity in it—that it did not seem best to take so many dogs, and she was glad to find such a good home for two of them. She said nothing about Dandy, for she had entrusted to her father the commission to "find a *very* good home" for him. But her heart felt pretty full when, the day before they started for Clover Beach, her father came hastily in, announcing that he had found an ideal home for Dandy—that there was no time to tell her of it now, but that she should learn all the particulars when they reached Clover Beach. More than one tear fell on Dandy's rough head as Lina led him from the coach-house, charging him earnestly *never* to forget her, and she could not help feeling a little hurt by her father's cheerful face. But she tried to console herself by thinking that he could not possibly know how much she loved Dandy, for she had chosen Dot, and that looked as if she loved him best; and then, struck by the thought that Dandy might see it in precisely that light, she had

a little cry by Dandy's "vacant chair" in the coach-house, called herself an ungrateful baby, and threw herself eagerly into the preparations for the early start which was to take place the next morning.

Dot behaved so intelligently and affectionately during the journey that the children, who had all lamented the loss of three such playfellows as Major and Floss and Dandy, declared he knew all about it, and was trying to "make it up" to them.

They reached the farm-house just in time to wash away the dust and "cool off" a little before the six-o'clock tea; and when everybody had eaten in a manner which was more flattering to Mrs. Denison's kind heart than encouraging to her hopes of a profitable summer, Mr. Cheston called the children out, saying there was time for a little walk before dark, and he thought they might like to see the sheep. Mr. Denison had told him there was a remarkably intelligent dog in the field with them—not a very high-bred animal, but one which he thought must be able to boast of at least one Scotch "collie" on his family tree. The children started eagerly off, reluctantly excusing their mother, who said that somebody must unpack the night-gowns and tooth-brushes; she was too tired to walk, and they could invite the American gentleman of Scotch descent to call upon her at his earliest convenience. She wanted to reserve three or four of the youngest children, but nobody was a bit sleepy, and Charlie volunteered as horse if any little legs should give out.

"What is his name, papa?" asked Lina as they climbed a hill and came in sight of the field of sheep, which were peacefully grazing therein.

"Curiously enough," said Mr. Cheston, "it is Dandy;" and just at that moment there was a joyful bark, and there, looking as if he had done nothing but mind sheep all his life, was their own Dandy and nobody else! He sprang upon them, barking and whining, no doubt trying to tell them that the farmer had kept him in the stable all day, and only just left him by that bush with a stern injunction to "Watch!"

The farmer appeared presently from behind the stone wall whence he had been watching the fun, and they all walked home together. Mrs. Cheston was quite as much surprised and delighted as any of them—excepting perhaps Lina—and papa had to tell at least three times how he had meant, from the first, that Lina should keep Dandy, but had wished her to feel the full satisfaction, as well as the pain, of her sacrifice—how the farmer had most opportunely had an errand to the city in which the Chestons lived the day before, and had gladly undertaken to escort Dandy home with him, assuring Mr. Cheston that he was a valuable dog—much more of a sheep-dog than a mongrel. Everybody's respect for Dandy rose at once, only Lina, laying her cheek for a moment on the rough head, whispered in his ear, "I loved you just as much when I thought you were a 'pure mongrel,' dear."

And Dandy, by way of saying "I know you did," licked Lina's



"IT WAS THEIR OWN DANDY, AND NOBODY ELSE!"

See Page 23,

face with a comprehensive sweep of his great red tongue before she could draw it away.

They all thought they were much too excited to sleep, but they changed their minds when heads had been on pillows for about five minutes, and did not even know they had changed them until the next morning, when they woke with a glad sense of freedom, and fell to unpacking and arranging and settling with great vigor. Mrs. Cheston and Lina had made some new hangings of bright flowered chintz for the cottage-parlor; Charlie had been promised the honor of calking and painting the boats, and, not having a heart of stone, he allowed Dick and Rob to "help," after a promise from them to "be very good and mind every single word" he said.

Nora skipped about from room to room, stopping sometimes to hold the tacks and hand the hammer to her mother and Lina, and promising to bestow her clothes in the little bureau in her room "by and by," while Kitty, with an air of grave importance, trotted up stairs with bundles of clothing in her somewhat small embrace, followed by little Polly, who with equal gravity carried up and down the battered old rag doll without which she never travelled; and Tom, the baby, divided his attentions among them all until a sudden laugh of delight caused Charlie to look up and discover him with both hands deep in the white paint. It took Lina a good hour to scour him clean, but he seemed to enjoy the scouring so much that she could not find it in her heart to be angry with him.

After this little episode he was released on parole. Charlie kindly but firmly established him, with Polly and Rob for company, in a large boat of the farmer's which was high and dry on the pebbly shore waiting repairs, and the little fellow, with a lapful of "pretty



stones" and shells, sat contentedly in the bottom of the old boat, while Polly and Rob "fished" over the stern for Dandy, who swallowed the bait every time, but declined to be "hauled in" with respectful firmness; and Kitty, distracted from her housekeeping cares by the talk and laughter on the shore, was made radiantly

happy by Charlie's request that she would help him splice a rope.

Nobody but Charlie's mother knew how many helps over hard places he gave the family that summer by his unobtrusive kindness and forbearance toward the children, but the love-light in her eyes was reward enough for him—that, and a desire for his company on the part of the children, which, if sometimes a little wearisome, was the sincerest possible flattery.

So the day of settling and arranging passed off quietly, and everything, even Nora's postponed share, was accomplished before it was time for the father to be there in the evening; and when he arrived, just as the bell was ringing for the six-o'clock tea, the "blue-flannel brigade" was equipped and drawn up in order to meet him—very blue as to clothes and very white as to collars and hands and faces, and not the least in the world blue as to feelings. Mr. Cheston often said that he wished for a few extra pairs of ears every evening of his life, for when he had been away all day, and even when he had not, his wife and his eight children had so many things to tell him by evening that one pair of ears, even though they were pretty good-sized ones, was not enough. This evening he had to hear, "Did you remember the mosquito-netting, dear?"

"Oh papa, come straight into the parlor; it's lovely!"

"Papa, every single boat is calked, and two are painted besides."

"Papa, I helped Charlie like everything; he said so."

"Papa, Mrs. Denison gave me a little garden and some seeds."

"I helped Charlie too, papa."

"We've been fishing, papa, and we 'most caught Dandy two or three times."

"Mrs. Denison gave me a gray-and-white kitten, papa!"

"I painted all my own hands, and sister had to scrape me just like the boat, papa."

Mr. Cheston clapped his hands over his ears. "No doubt you all spoke plainly," he said, "but I am wrestling with an impression that the parlor is hung with mosquito-nettings, and the boats calked with kittens, and that Dandy has been fishing in the garden and caught some seeds. I would like *one person* to tell me if this is correct?"

Everybody laughed, and waited a minute for the rest to begin, and then, finding nobody did, they all began at once again; but a second loud peal from the tea-bell caused a general scamper for the farm-house, and after tea and an hour on the broad piazza most of this hardworking family was very glad to go to bed.





CHAPTER II.

A LITTLE MISUNDERSTANDING.

DOUBTLESS you will wonder what time of year it was when all this happened, and when I tell you it was the very beginning of June, you will wonder still more what had become of school for those who were old enough to go to it. Mr. and Mrs. Cheston had ideas of their own upon this subject, which they carried out in spite of many well-meant remarks from people whose ideas were only theirs by adoption. They were very anxious that all of the eight, no matter how great they might become as to mind, might have sound and healthy bodies to carry out the intentions of their great minds; and during the weeks which were spent at Clover Beach before vacation began and after it ended, lessons were regularly learned and said, so that those of them who went to school might enter again on an equality with their schoolmates; but every minute not occupied in this way, and some that were, were spent in the free air; and when they did at last go home the cool and bracing weather

of late autumn or early winter did not undo half the good they had gained, as a few hot weeks of September might have done. It was no "playing school," as they fully understood; missed lessons were learned again on the day on which they were missed, and their mother's discipline was as firm as it was gentle.

Among the sacrifices which were to be made this summer, not the least was Lina's undertaking to divide the family mending with her mother. She was very fond of drawing, in which both she and Nora had made good progress, and although the more decided talent possessed by Nora sometimes caused Lina a little feeling of envy, it was the old story of the hare and the tortoise: Lina's plodding industry more than made up for Nora's quickness. Lina would gladly have spent all of the stormy days, and even some of the fair ones, in this her favorite employment, and her mother appreciated her voluntary offer to be responsible for half of the mending.

The day after the settling-day proved rainy, and Lina, who had brought an uncompleted drawing from school, established herself comfortably by the largest window in the little parlor and went eagerly to work, resolutely smothering a consciousness that her mother had a headache; that Dick and Bob were doing something on the piazza which seemed to require a good deal of hammering; that Kitty and Tom were in the next room ominously silent; and that Polly, who was not very strong, and who often stole away from the rougher games of the other children, was standing wistfully at

the end of the table quietly watching her. Lina held off her drawing, looking at it, for a minute, and then went to work, becoming fully absorbed in a few minutes, so that she started unpleasantly when Polly, in the plaintive manner which somehow always annoyed



Lina, said, "Sister, won't you please lend me a pencil and piece of paper? It's so lonesome with nothing to do, and my Kitty is asleep and won't play."

"I think we might take the liberty of waking your Kitty up," said Lina, trying hard to speak pleasantly and reaching out for the kid-

ten, which was curled up on the window-sill in a very sound nap indeed. But Kitty did not respond ; she purred sleepily, stretched herself, and curled up again with a determination which in some curious way made Lina think of her own. So, with no very good grace, Lina handed a pencil-stump and piece of paper to Polly, but in a few minutes the child made some motion which shook the table slightly, and Lina exclaimed sharply, "I wish you'd go somewhere else with your drawing, Polly ; you nearly made me spoil this with your shaking."

The little girl trotted meekly away, and Lina resumed her drawing. But somehow the enjoyment of it was gone, and after a few minutes of unsuccessful trying to absorb herself in it once more, she laid down pencil and brush—for it was a water-color, one of the first that she had undertaken—resolving to call in Dick and Rob and try to interest all the children in some sort of moderately quiet game. But just as she rose for this good purpose her mother came into the room with the work-basket and Dick's blue-flannel shirt of the last summer. The headache from which she was suffering made her look so pale that Lina did not even say "Oh!" when Mrs. Cheston handed her the shirt, which was split down the back in a manner suggestive of a cast-off locust chrysalis, saying, "I'm sorry to give you this to do, dear, but it was overlooked before we left home, and I'm afraid Dick will get wet to-day and need it."

Lina took it, saying as cheerfully as she could, "Oh, never mind, mamma ; it's just a straight tear, and I can soon mend it."

"Where are the rest of the children?" said Mrs Cheston, looking round a little anxiously. "I don't want them to go out and get wet, and my head has ached so I was obliged to lie still."

"Charlie is in his room, mamma," replied Lina, "trying to work out that last example you set him—he says it's very hard; and Dick and Rob are pounding dreadfully out on the porch—I was just going to call them in; and I don't know where the rest are."

A slight crash and a little scream from the next room answered for Kitty and Tom, who were found whimpering over a broken cologne-bottle.

"I hoped you were trying to take my place, dear," said Mrs. Cheston, a little reproachfully. "I think the drawing could have waited."

"I'm sorry, mamma," answered Lina penitently. "I'll try to do something to amuse them now, and you go and lie down again; you look ready to drop."

"My head does ache very badly" said Mrs. Cheston, kissing Lina as she spoke, "and I must lie down, I am afraid; so I will have to ask you to take my place to-day. I am sorry about the drawing, dear."

"Indeed, it doesn't matter, mamma," said Lina, returning the kiss warmly. "I was very selfish to go at it when I knew your head ached, but I'll try to make up for that now."

She tucked her mother up in her bed, and then went to persuade the carpenters to rest a while. This was easily done by the promise

of a game of some sort in the garret of the cottage, which was a wide unceiled room extending all over the house, whose sloping roof made opportunity for two or three wings from the rafters. Lina had some difficulty in coaxing Nora to lay aside the story-book with which she had retired to a corner of the garret; Kitty and Tom were somewhat depressed by their misfortune with the cologne-bottle; Charlie, who, as they all agreed, "made everything go," was still busy with his example. The game was not a very spirited one, and at its close, Polly, Kitty, and Dick took possession of Tom, and announced that they were going down to the parlor to play "Bad Lady." As this was the quietest of all their games, being, like the White Knight's contrivances, "an invention of their own," and consisting of a "pretend" that the "bad lady" visited her friends every day, to their great annoyance, compelling them to treat her with frigidity on all days but those, at long intervals, when they considered a visit allowable, Lina let them go upon their promising to be "very quiet indeed" and to stay in the parlor. She succeeded in interesting Nora and Rob in a story, and silence reigned until the sound of Mr. Denison's boots upon the piazza announced dinner, and there was a general rush to open the door. Lina had seen the approaching dinner from her lofty window, and had run down stairs to gather up her painting and drawing materials from the only table in the parlor. She could not help smiling at the sight which presented itself as she entered the door. The baby, perched in his high chair at the table, was holding her color-box on



"KITTY, POLLY, AND DICK SURROUNDED HIM."

See Page 37.

his hand, as he had seen her hold it, while he painted busily at what she did not at first see. His lips were pressed earnestly together, and his feet crossed tightly; he was evidently very much engaged with his work, while Kitty, Polly, and Dick surrounded him with admiration written on their faces. Lina went to lift him down, and then she saw he had been illuminating a sketch upon which she especially prided herself, and which she had meant to elaborate into a picture. She could not scold the baby, but she turned angrily to Dick. "I think *you* might have stopped him, anyhow, Dick," she said; "you knew how I valued that sketch."

"Indeed, Lina," answered Dick earnestly, "I was working at a puzzle away off there in the corner when he began to paint, and I only just now looked, and he had daubed it up so I didn't know what it was at all."

Somehow, the fact that Lina had been mending the *chasm* in Dick's shirt, as she told the story, seemed to add to her bitterness of feeling, but she controlled herself with a violent effort, and began to arrange the table. Her mother came in while she was doing this, saying cheerfully, "I have had a good nap, and the headache is all gone: the house has been as still as the Sleeping Beauty's palace."

Then, noticing the cloud on Lina's face, she asked: "What is the matter, dear?"

While Lina was trying to frame a moderate answer Dick replied for her: "Baby has painted over Lina's best picture, mamma, but

indeed I didn't know he was doing it, and I'm very sorry he has done it."

"I am sorry too," said Mrs. Cheston; "but Lina, dear, you know how often I have warned you about leaving your things within Baby's reach: he is too little yet to understand fully about not touching what does not belong to him. I think I can take the paint off, if you will give me the picture, without destroying the pencil-lines."

"Thank you, mamma," said Lina gratefully. "I know I ought to have put the things away, but Baby was up stairs with me at first, and I forgot about them afterward."

Everything went better after dinner. Charlie's example was at last done, and he exalted Dick by offering to play chess with him. Mr. Denison, when he brought the dinner, had gravely produced from his deepest pocket a large bunch of carpet-rags and some stout thread, saying that his wife had sent word that she would be very much obliged indeed if any of the young ladies would help her out by sewing these, as she was in a hurry for the carpet. Nora seized eagerly upon the bright-colored strips, and spent a happy afternoon sorting, sewing, and winding them, declaring that it was "not a bit like stupid plain sewing."

Dandy had made his way in with the dinner, and the little ones had begged so hard for him that he was allowed to stay. His wet feet suggested a new "play:" he was pronounced very ill with "information of the lungs," and his medicine, which, fortunately for him,



"HIS MEDICINE WAS ADMINISTERED AT SHORT INTERVALS."

See Page 43.

was nothing worse than milk and water, carefully bottled and labelled, was administered at alarmingly short intervals by three attentive nurses, who felt greatly encouraged by the fact that he had an excellent appetite for the numerous saucers of watered gravy which did duty for beef-tea. Lina, with a clear conscience, worked happily at her "restored" drawing, from which her mother's skilful fingers had quite cleared the paint, and every one was surprised when the "carry-all" drew up at the door to let Mr. Cheston out. The clouds let the sun out almost at the same minute, and there was a general clapping of hands at the prospect of a fine day after the rainy one. The next day was as fine as it had promised to be, and the drying properties of sand were fully appreciated as the children raced down to the beach after lessons, followed at some distance by Mrs. Cheston, who, after a few turns on the sand, went back, leaving the younger ones in Lina's and Charlie's care. The great excitement of the day was pitching the tent, which had been purchased with the united savings of the children. They had longed for it all the previous summer, and gone without a number of small things during the winter that they might buy it. It was large enough to hold all the family with close packing, but then they would very seldom want to be in it all at once. They chose a sheltered spot beside a high rock. Charlie drove the stakes securely in with a heavy mallet which Mr. Denison had lent him, and everybody helped fasten the cords. They arranged it with the *gable* toward the sea, so that when the flap-doors were raised the sea-

breeze swept through it delightfully ; and that, with the shelter from the sun which it afforded, made them proudly confident that there would be one cool place, no matter what the summer might do in the way of heat.

The younger children soon found the coolness too much of a good thing for the time of year, and scattered over the beach picking up seaweed and shells, while Charlie and Lina remained around the tent arranging the extra cover which was to keep it water-tight, and quite oblivious of the little brothers and sisters until the sound of loud voices and laughter, and then a scream from the little ones, drew their attention to a good-sized boat filled with rough-looking boys. To their consternation, they saw Dick standing up among the boys, apparently trying to get out, but a man, whom Charlie recognized as a fisherman who lived in the neighborhood, pushed off the boat, while the boys laid detaining hands on Dick, and Rob, with a startled face, stood looking on. By the time Lina and Charlie could reach the spot the boat was some little distance out, and Rob told rather incoherently how Dick had said he wished he was going fishing too, and the boys had half helped, half shoved him into the boat.

The fisherman laughed at Lina's and Charlie's consternation. "You needn't be worried, little miss," he said to Lina ; "they're only going to anchor a bit out there and fish, and I'll warrant your little brother will be a good-right gladder to come in than he was to go out."



"THE BOYS LAID DETAINING HANDS ON DICK."

See Page 42.

There was nothing for it but to go back and tell their mother, who, full of anxiety lest the boat should put out farther to sea, paced up and down the beach until she saw the boys raise the anchor and begin to row in. It was a very white and wretched little boy that was fished up from the bottom of the boat and handed ashore, and his mother saw at once that he had been sufficiently punished; so she said no more than that she was glad to have him safely back again until she was tucking him up in bed that night. He had tried to excuse himself by saying that she had never told him he must not go fishing with boys; adding that he had only said he *wished* he were going, and that then they had taken hold of him and pulled him in. But his mother's gentle words soon made him see the falseness of this excuse, and he said honestly, "Mamma, I needn't have gone so close, and I hoped they would ask me when I said I wished I could go; and if I had run away when I saw them coming to pull me in, they wouldn't have waited to catch me. But I'm really and truly sorry, mamma—not just because I was so dreadfully sick, though I thought I was going to die, but because I disobeyed you—No, I didn't *disobey* you, either—" and Dick stopped, puzzled.

"My little boy disobeyed in spirit, but not in letter," said Mrs. Cheston; "and you know we are told that 'the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life;' that is, if we do things which are unforbidden in words which we know in our hearts are wrong, that is the real disobedience, even though we are obeying all the written and spoken commands laid upon us."

"Yes, I see, mamma," said Dick. "People have to remember a great many things, I think," he added with a sigh.

"But not without help," said Mrs. Cheston as she kissed her little boy good-night. "The dear Father is always listening to the smallest and weakest of his children, and he says, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'"

The impression which this incident and the little talk which followed made on Dick was deepened by the fact that his mother exacted no promise when he went to the beach next morning, and, although he said nothing, he made a very firm resolve that such trust should not be disappointed.

The weather and water soon grew warm enough to make bathing and wading safe and comfortable, and then, the children decided, the fun began in earnest. Lina could not or did not help somewhat envying the younger ones; she did not like sewing, and could not sew both rapidly and well; and she groaned to herself, and sometimes, I am sorry to say, to other people, over her share of the weekly mending, which generally did look rather appalling as it lay in state on the largest bed fresh from the wash. But her share was done notwithstanding, and honestly done; and she was even beginning to take an interest in putting on "mathematically-correct" patches, and to find, by timing herself, that she grew able from day to day to sew a little faster without slighting her work. She was given to dreaming, as I have said, and one of her mother's gentle talks had shown her how to turn her imagination into a help



"POLLY, ROB, AND THE BABY PRACTISED JUMPS."

See Page 49.

instead of a hinderance; so one morning, when she found Polly and Rob and the baby earnestly practising "jumps" off a step and measuring with a string the distance jumped, she "made a note" of the lesson in patience and perseverance which Rob unconsciously conveyed as he said, "Just see, sister! I jumped *that* much longer to-day than I could yesterday;" and he triumphantly held up a knotted string. "Baby's only just begun to-day," he added, "but we're teaching him, and he'll soon learn."

Lina attempted a sketch of the pretty little group, but it did not satisfy her, and she flattered Nora into two whole days of unusual sweetness by asking her to make a picture from the unsatisfactory sketch, telling her why she wished it. Nora did her very best, and made a really pretty picture, which Lina pinned to the wall of the room which they shared; and its silent lesson had more effect than they were aware of on both of them that summer. It was the old story of the never-ending ripple from the stone thrown in the water. No matter how small the stone, the widening circles keep on.

Nora had an unusual talent for drawing for a child of her age, and the spurring which Lina's generous praise gave it made her overcome her indolence and take up her pencil again. The drawing was a thing upon which Mrs. Cheston did not insist after they left school, for she wished them to be as much as possible in the open air, but she was very glad to see her two oldest daughters sketching amicably together from fence-corners and perches in conveniently low apple trees; for these two, of all her children,

were the ones whose wills and tempers most often clashed. They both possessed the power of irritating each other by sharp, sarcastic speeches, and both were only too well aware of the joints in each other's armor. Nora had a curious fear of the sea, and could not be induced to bathe in it, and Mrs. Cheston wisely refrained from urging; so, while the rest were bathing—for even little Tom went fearlessly in, clinging to the arm of the farmer's stout, good-natured daughter—Nora would wander up and down the sand with an old net which had been washed up and discovered by the children, fancying herself the "fisher-maiden," and feeling very romantic indeed. On one of these occasions she unfortunately waved her handkerchief to Tom, who, with his stout companion's arm in his grasp, was capering toward the shore. The other children had just come out of the water, and Lina, who had been particularly annoyed that morning by some piece of carelessness about their room, called out sarcastically, "Your white flag is highly appropriate, my dear; it would be still more so if it were only a feather."

The rest of the children, even Charlie, laughed thoughtlessly, and Nora, too angry to think of anything appropriate to say, shut her lips in a manner which Lina would have done well to accept as a warning. But she scampered to the bath-house without noticing Nora's face, and the incident was immediately forgotten by every one but Nora.



"NORA WAVED HER HANDKERCHIEF TO TOM."

See Page 50.

CHAPTER III.

A LITTLE MISUNDERSTANDING—CONCLUDED.



DAY or two after this, Lina, passing through the narrow hall of the cottage, came upon Nora, who was sitting before the rough easel which Charlie had made her, so absorbed with a charcoal drawing that she did not see Lina until the latter was close upon her, when she snatched the drawing from the easel, saying pettishly, "How you scared me, Lina! I wish you would

not jump out on people so."

Lina laughed. "Your conscience must be bad, I'm afraid, Miss O'Neal," she said lightly, and passed on. If she had not been hurrying to meet Charlie at the tent, her curiosity would have been roused as to the picture which Nora so hastily concealed, and she would also not have wasted so good an opportunity to tease Nora about her artistic get-up. Lina never cared, so long as she had good working-materials, about the "accessories," as she grandly

called them ; but Nora had a weakness for looking like an artist, and had coaxed Charlie—who was easily coaxed about such things as this—into making her an easel, a highly artistic-looking mahlstick, and a small camp-stool which could be folded up for greater convenience in carrying.

Lina, as I said, was becoming resigned to assisting with the family mending, and even taking some pride in it, and Charlie did not dream how much his ever-ready sympathy had done toward that end. It was not idle sympathy, either. He lightened many an hour of her labors for her by helping her to move down to the tent on her mending-days, and there, with the great waves breaking at their feet, the “keen, sweet smell” of the ocean blown in their faces, and Charlie’s pleasant voice reading some old or new treasure to her, she must have been a much more ungracious and ungrateful girl than she was to have felt her burden a very heavy one in this respect. As she grew more accustomed and resigned to the sewing, she began to take rather more credit to herself about it than she really deserved. There is a pleasure in doing almost anything well ; this pleasure she had learned, and I am afraid she mixed it up a little in her mind with the other and higher pleasure of doing right just for the sake of right, and of that love which made so great a sacrifice for us. It did not occur to her that she was still found wanting by a much more real test. The care of the younger children was a worriment to which she did not seem to become in the least resigned ; and Mrs. Cheston saw with sorrow



"NORA WAS SITTING BEFORE THE ROUGH EASEL."

See Page 53.

the increasing irritability with which she checked and reproved them when they were in her charge.

Lina was fully conscious of this herself, and had many a secret crying-spell about it; but the feeling that she had conquered herself about the sewing gave her an idea that, since she had failed to overcome this other dragon, it must be invincible. Charlie was naturally sweet-tempered and hated discord; he had, besides, a great horror of being supposed to "preach;" so he said nothing, although he felt deeply for Lina, for he saw, and guessed when he did not see, how her cross words to the children reacted on her own happiness. He chanced to be present one day when Lina reminded the younger children, far more sharply than the occasion required, that they had been forbidden to wade that morning, and he said, very gently and playfully, "Remember the little donkey, Lina; you know we were often able to lead her where we could not drive her."

Lina turned her head away to hide the tears that filled her eyes, and Charlie, fearing he had only made matters worse, said no more.

Mrs. Cheston stayed with the younger ones herself as much as she possibly could, but she often liked them to be down on the beach when she could not conveniently leave the house; and then it was Lina's and Charlie's trust to see that the little sisters and brothers fell into neither mischief nor danger. Charlie's mind was fertile in expedients, and Lina did not feel the care of the

children half so much when he was with her; but his lessons always occupied him a good while, for his memory was retentive, but not quick, and he was very conscientious about them. It was he who had made Rob happy for days, and at intervals for all summer, by fastening a saddle improvised from the remains of a door-mat, covered with an old piece of gay-colored chintz, and some loops for stirrups, to the trunk of the great wisteria which clambered over the farm-house, and which had grown to such a size that it looked more like a prostrate tree which had suddenly decided to pick itself up and run than a vine. On this "horse" Rob took many a long "pretend" journey, and had adventures only less wonderful than those of the immortal Don Quixote. It was Charlie who showed the children that fresh water could be found by digging a hole, and not a very deep one, just behind the sandy bluff on the seashore; it was he who marked off the "hopscotch" grounds on the sand, and who was the ultimate authority in all disputes about the various games. It was not always pleasant or easy for him to give up whatever he happened to be doing when the children appealed to him; but Charlie was earnestly trying to follow his Master, and of all that he knew of that beloved Master I think these few words had sunk most deeply into his heart: "Even Christ pleased not Himself."

Nora's strong will exercised itself a good deal over Dick, and these two were generally the ringleaders in any unlawful doings; and if Lina would but have taken them into her confidence, and



"ON THIS HORSE ROB TOOK MANY A LONG JOURNEY."

See Page 58.

asked their help, she would have had little or no trouble, for Nora, queer and stubborn as she often was, was also loving and honorable when her shell was penetrated, and, like the little donkey, she could be far more easily led than driven. She had an absurd talent for caricature, and could hit off a recognizable likeness in her roughest drawings; and when she found that she had the power to annoy Lina with her works of art, she exerted her invention, and Lina never knew what misrepresentation of herself and Charlie she might find on the sand swept so temptingly smooth by the retreating tide.

One bright morning in June, just before their holidays began, Lina reluctantly left her drawing to go with the children to the beach. There had been a storm the day before, which had made the air unusually cool for the time of year and the sea very rough.

"It is too cold for bathing, or even for wading, this morning, dears," said Mrs. Cheston as she helped Lina to button them up in old sacks and waterproofs, "and I don't wish you to get your feet wet, for you nearly all have little colds; so don't go any farther down the beach toward the water than to that heap of drift and stones where we were sitting yesterday.—You will see that they do not, daughter?" she added, turning to Lina.

"Yes, mamma—if I can," said Lina despondently.

Her mother took the injured-looking face between her hands and kissed it. "Dear child," she said, "I wish I could see you make

your Sunday lessons last you all the week. St. Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' was not removed; he was told, 'My grace is sufficient for thee;' but to make it sufficient we must ask for it every day and many times a day."

"I do—indeed I do, mamma," said Lina earnestly, "but you don't know—" and she stopped, unwilling to say what seemed to her like telling tales.

"No, darling, we cannot, any of us, know just what another's trials and temptations are, but there is always One who 'knows all, yet loves us better than He knows.' Now run after the children," she added gently; and Lina went, half comforted, but only half, for she felt as if her mother undervalued her trouble, and she had not yet fully turned to that other Help which, rightly trusted, never fails.

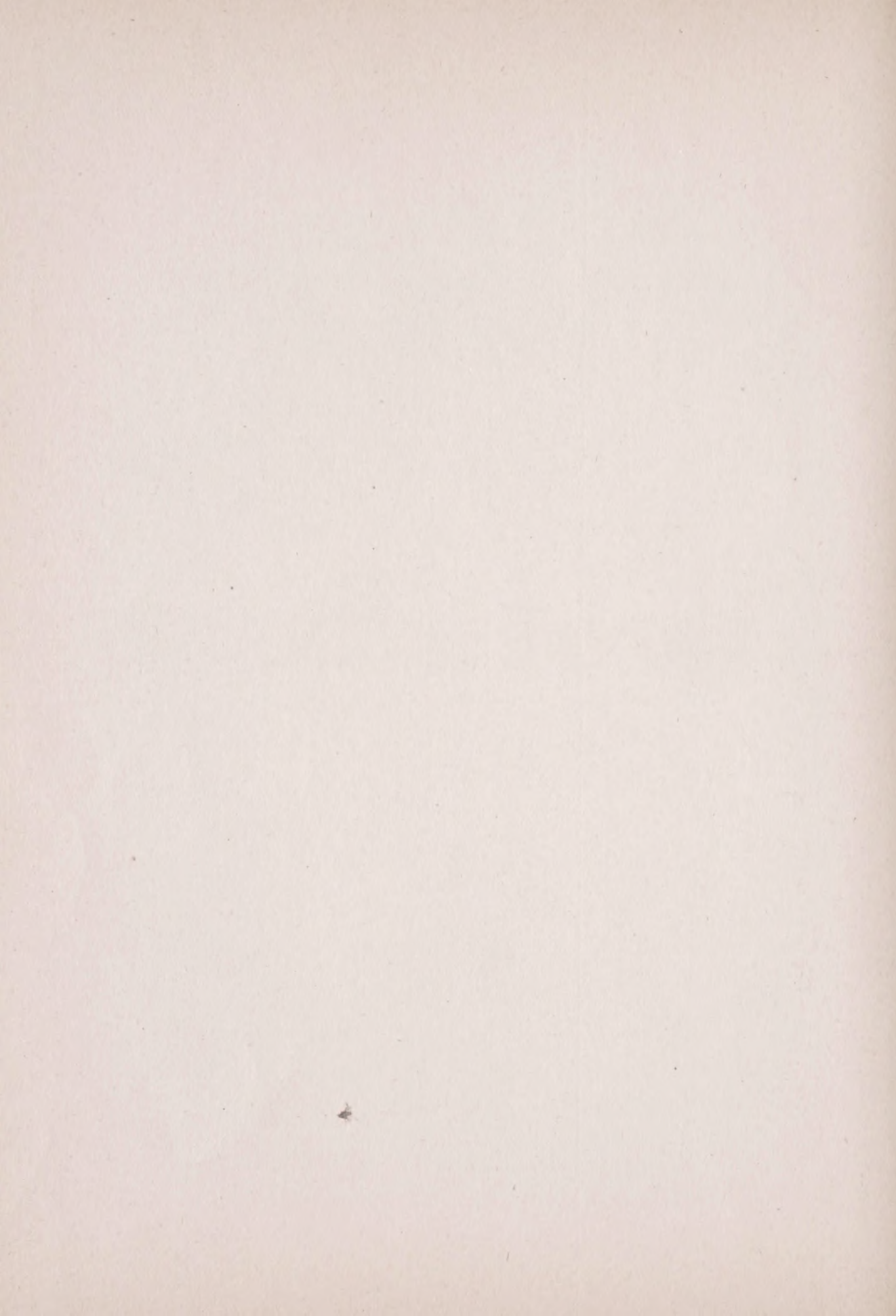
The children were nowhere in sight, and she ran down the lane which led to the sea, fearing they had had time to get into mischief already. She was reassured, however, as she came out of the lane and passed through the patch of bayberry-bushes which bordered the sand. There they all were, quite within the prescribed limit, gathered around Nora and shouting with laughter. Lina's heart relented; she resolved to amuse as well as keep watch over them, and as she drew near she called out cheerfully, "Come, children, let's dig a deep square place for a pond here, just above the stones; and then, if we dig some little canals to-morrow down to high-water mark, we shall have a famous place to sail the boats."

There was an eager assent from everybody but Nora, who hung



"DICK WAS EQUIPPED WITH A HUGE SOLDIER-CAP.

See Page 65.



her head and began to walk away, marshalling by her side Dick, who, like herself, was ornamented with a huge paper soldier-cap, and also equipped with a red handkerchief tied to a stick and the lid of Mrs. Denison's largest boiler. He held back a little, but Nora gave him a resolute push and nodded mischievously to Lina over her shoulder as they marched away, remarking, "We're going crusading."

Lina had been looking at them, amused by this fresh freak of Nora's, but now the children's glances called her attention to what lay at her feet. It was a rude but really funny drawing, on a very large scale, of the tent with Charlie and herself within it. Charlie was decorated with a pair of huge spectacles, and appeared to be reading from a book nearly as large as himself, but the chief energies of the designer had been bestowed upon Lina. Nora had unfortunately been present the day before when Lina had asked her mother if she might "put up her hair with a comb" before she went back to school; consequently the portrait was adorned with a huge knot of hair fastened up by a comb at least a foot high. Rude as some of Nora's drawings were, she undoubtedly had talent, for her faces generally wore the expression she meant them to have; and this was a notable instance: the self-satisfied smirk on the face which was meant for Lina's was uncomfortably like Lina's smile when she felt superior. A large basket, which, to avoid all misunderstanding, had "Mending" conspicuously on its side, stood near, and in the hands of the figure were a needle and what was

evidently meant for a much-patched bathing-dress. But it was the inscription more than all the rest which reduced Lina to speechless anger and disgust; underneath, in irregular but perfectly legible letters, was printed, "The Kristyan Marteress."

If Charlie had only been there he would have helped her to laugh it off, for he always laughed or retorted by good-naturedly caricaturing Nora's defects in drawing; but Lina was very sensitive to ridicule, and only a day or two before had greatly resented the indignity of a would-be likeness of herself leading a band of subdued-looking infants, each with a rope around its neck, into the sea for a bath. And, unfortunately, Charlie was not there to encourage her, being, as usual, a little late with his lessons.

It was too much. Lina burst into tears and sank down on the sand sobbing bitterly, and the children, frightened at this unusual sight, ran after Nora to inform her, in consternation, that "sister was crying like everything."

A great many people since Pharaoh's time have "hardened their hearts," and Nora did it then. "Let her cry, then, if she's such a baby," she said scornfully, while her heart quaked with fright at the result of her naughtiness. "Come on; let's finish the fort and stick in the flag."

"Oh, but, Nora," said Dick, hanging back, "the fort's below the stones, and you know what mamma said."

"I know," answered Nora, "but mamma thought the sand would be wet, and it's quite, quite dry; and besides," she added viciously,

"mamma told Lina to take care of us, and if she doesn't call us back it's all right." And she ran toward the fort, which the waves had partly washed away since the day before. At the same moment Charlie appeared on the beach to find Lina, with a sullen face, just rubbing out with her spade the last lines of the picture, and the children, unheeded, on the forbidden ground.

"Why, Lina!" he exclaimed "they're all where mamma told them not to go!"

"I can't help it, Charlie," said Lina forlornly. "I was just thinking how I would try to be kinder to them, and had called out to them to come and dig a pond—and I would much rather have read—when I found the worst picture Nora has drawn yet: it was perfectly insulting, and I'm glad I had it rubbed out before you saw it. I *cannot* take care of those children any more unless mamma will keep Nora with her."

Charlie's only answer was to make a speaking-trumpet of his hands and shout at the top of his voice, "Children! O you children! come off the forbidden ground to once't!"

They all ran to him immediately—all but Nora, who stood defiant on the remains of the fort. Charlie walked down to the boundary and called again, still speaking kindly and cheerfully, "Nora, come back, dear; I don't want to bring poor mamma through the sand just for one-eighth of her children, when the other seven-eighths are all right."

Nora began to come, but very slowly, and kicking the sand

about as she walked a good deal more than was necessary as she remarked easily, "Well, I'll come *for you*, Sub, because you're not for ever 'n' ever nagging me."

The hour on the beach was not particularly cheerful after that. Lina took no notice whatever of Nora, but tried, in a rather subdued fashion, to amuse the others; so Charlie took compassion on the rebel, and kept her quiet with "tit-tat-toe" played on the sand with sticks. I think everybody was glad when they heard the note of warning from Mrs. Denison's horn which told them it was time to scamper home and make ready for dinner.



CHAPTER IV.

CLEAR WEATHER AGAIN.



“I HOPE everybody has been good, and consequently happy,” said Mrs. Cheston cheerfully as she met them at the door.

The children looked sober, but nobody spoke, until Lina said in a low voice, “I haven’t, mamma; I got angry and I didn’t take good care of the children.”

Nora had looked defiant as they neared the house, expecting that for once the general feeling about “tale-telling” would be overcome by Lina’s indignation, but when she heard something so totally different from what she had expected, she colored and looked uneasy, but still kept stubbornly silent.

“We haven’t any of us been very good, mamma,” said Dick manfully. “We went a little ways below the stones, first of all, except sister—she didn’t, and I think she was real good—but we went because—I mean—I didn’t mean—” and Dick stopped in

distress ; he did not wish to "tell on" Nora, and yet he felt that the rest of them were not so much to blame as she.

Mrs. Cheston did not urge him to go on ; she had not studied her children all their lives for nothing, and Nora's face explained Dick's stumbling confession to her. "We will go to dinner now," she said gravely—"we must not keep Mrs. Denison waiting—and afterward you can all come to me in my room."

When dinner was over the children followed their mother into her room, and then Nora, who had seen and enjoyed Dick's perplexity, spoke first and said : "I made Dick and all of them—all the little ones, I mean—go down to the fort, which was only a little bit of a way below the stones, mamma ; and I said the sand was quite dry, and you didn't know it would be dry ; and I said if we oughtn't to go, Lina ought to stop us, for you told her to take care of us."

"And do you think, little daughter," said Mrs. Cheston, "that what Lina did or did not do made any difference about what it was right for you to do? You heard me tell you where you were not to go ; and even little Tom, who is only three years old, whispered to me at dinner that he was 'very sorry,' without adding that you caused him to disobey. I am not going to punish you, although you have grieved me very much. I am only going to ask you not to go to the beach again until I can go with you, unless you feel that I can trust you not to disregard my known wishes."

Nora said, "Yes, mamma, I won't," and walked out of the room. The others had all said they were "very sorry," and held up their



"KITTY WAS ABSORBED IN A DOMINO-HOUSE."

See Page 73.

lips for mamma's forgiving kiss, and at last Mrs. Cheston and Lina were left alone together, except for little Kitty, who was sitting at the table absorbed in a domino-house which she was building.

"Will you not tell me, dear," said Mrs. Cheston, "how you came to let the children run into mischief without trying to stop them?"

"Mamma," said Lina slowly, "I can't. It was partly my own fault, but— Well, yes, I suppose it was *all* my own fault, for I needn't have—" and Lina stopped short.

"She couldn't help crying, mamma," said Kitty artlessly, "and I'm ever so sorry I laughed, but indeed I could not help it, either, the picture was so very funny; but I do love you, sister, and I'll try not to laugh again;" and the little girl came over to give Lina a hug and a kiss, and then turned contentedly to her domino-house again.

Mrs. Cheston drew Lina to her and kissed her. "You need not tell me, dear," she said; "I can understand, and I don't wonder your feelings were hurt; but try to remember about the 'thorn,' and this too: 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'"

Mr. Cheston intended taking a week's holiday in the early part of July, including of course the "Glorious Fourth," and to this the children were looking eagerly forward. There was to be a clambake on the beach, and a day's sailing as a special treat to the "old-clothes brigade," and, most delightful of all, an all-day picnic up the river, which was to be a kind of exploring expedition.

But, to give thorough enjoyment to the carrying out of all

these pleasant plans, perfect peace and harmony would be necessary; so Charlie was very glad when next morning, as they left the breakfast-table, Dick drew him aside and said, "I mean to run away when Nora draws pictures any more. If Lina *is* a baby to cry about it, I don't think folks ought to be mean, even to babies; and Lina never said a word, day before yesterday, when I brought her my oldest blue shirt split all the whole way up the back again—though she's sewed it up twice already since we've been here—but just took it and mended it as good as mamma could have done."

"I'm glad to hear you talk like that, Dick," said Charlie heartily. "Lina isn't a baby. Don't you remember that last winter, when Tom's apron caught fire, she was the only one who thought to throw the rug around him; and mamma said she saved his life: that doesn't look much like being a baby. But it hurts Lina's feelings when Nora sets you cubs all to laughing at her with those pictures; and if we ever expect to be anything like papa we mustn't begin by making fun of girls."

"I'll not do it any more, Charlie," said Dick gravely, "and I mean to tell Lina I'm sorry—wouldn't you?"

"Yes, indeed I would," answered Charlie; "and I think we must try to-day if we can't coax Nora to tell her so too, and to promise to stop drawing those absurd pictures; for we want to have a first-rate time next week, and we can't if things don't clear up a little."

They all went to the beach that morning, for Mrs. Cheston, unwilling that Nora should lose the benefit of the salt air, and seeing no signs of the promise, took her paper and pen and ink and arranged herself snugly in a nest of cloaks and shawls where she could see the children. It was much warmer than it had been the day before, but Mrs. Cheston thought it scarcely warm enough for the children to bathe; however, she let them take off their shoes and stockings and wade, which was better than nothing. They finished digging the pond while the tide was still rising, and had the pleasure of seeing it fill. Lina helped them kindly, and tried to be interested in the different ships, and to behave to them all, and especially to Nora, as if nothing had happened; but Charlie noticed that Nora scarcely spoke to Lina at all, and that when she did speak it was in a very distant fashion.

Nora soon grew tired of the pond, and, calling Dick to go with her, wandered along the beach with her bucket, playing at digging clams to sell. But she did not play very spiritedly, and Charlie, who was watching his chance, soon saw her sit down on a convenient little bank, with an agreeable paddling-place for her feet just below it. Dick went on digging, finding wonderful stones and shells in the sand, and Charlie joined them, stretching himself out on the sand by Nora's ditch.

"Well, Miss O'Neal," he said pleasantly, "might I ask what you have in your bucket forbye there?"

"I wish you'd not call me that," she exclaimed pettishly.

"Not call you 'my darling, sweet Nora O'Neal'?" he asked, looking surprised. "Certainly not, if you are serious, but I thought you rather liked it."

"You're just doing it to make fun of me," she pouted, "and I don't like to be made fun of."

"Oh-h-h!" said Dick with a great deal of expression, and he gave a long whistle, for which Charlie shook his head at him.

"You needn't go *that* way, Dick," said Nora sharply. "I don't know what you mean."

"It's a free country, I believe," said Dick composedly: "fellows can whistle if they want to—out of doors, anyhow."

"Yes, but suppose some other fellow doesn't like it?" said Charlie.

"Then he can go away," replied Dick.

"But it isn't always convenient to go away," pursued Charlie—"when people happen to be living in the same house, for instance."

"Well, then," said Dick—and Charlie saw that his eyes were twinkling mischievously—"I suppose a fellow mustn't whistle, even if he has a right to, unless he's going to let other fellows whistle all they please too?"

"That's about it," said Charlie, "and very neatly put.—Nora dear," he went on, "I don't know what that picture was, but I think it must have been something very unkind to make Lina cry so and forget mamma's charge; and it seems to me it would be only fair

to Lina for you to tell mamma about it, unless you have done so already, for you may be quite sure Lina did not tell. And then—I don't mean to lecture you, dear, but we have all been looking forward to next week, you know, and don't you think you will enjoy it more if you tell mamma all about this, and then ask Lina's pardon?"

"Now, you needn't go on like that, Sub," said Nora stubbornly. "Mamma knows I draw pictures, for she saw the one of Lina falling out of the boat, and she laughed; and if I told Lina I was sorry she'd just give a sort of resigned-till-the-next-time sort of look; you know she would."

"I hope you will think differently before to-morrow, dear," said Charlie, but he said nothing more, for he saw that the obstinate fit was not yet over.

That afternoon, as Lina sat on the piazza sketching, Kitty came running to her, cuddling in her hands a little yellow duck. "Oh, look, sister! look what Aunty Denison gave me!" she cried eagerly. "Its mother is dead, and all its little brothers and sisters, and she says I may have it for my very own; and won't you help me feed it?"

Lina's struggle with herself was so brief that Kitty did not suspect it. Then she turned from her drawing and took the orphan in her lap.

"What would you give it to eat?" asked Kitty gravely.

"You might soak a little bread," said Lina with equal gravity; and

she repressed a smile when Kitty came triumphantly back from a foraging-expedition with a large slice of bread swimming in a finger-bowl of water, and handed Lina a silver spoon. The little duck did not seem to mind the finger-bowl at all, and he ate out of the silver spoon as if he had been born with one in his mouth, until Lina said she was really afraid to give him any more.

"Yes, he might burst, you know, he's so *very* little," said Kitty anxiously, "and I'm sure I don't see where he's put all that bread, for it was 'most as big as he was. Sister," she continued, with the utter want of connection for which she was distinguished, and which had earned her, among the older ones, the title of "Mrs. Nickleby," "what *did* Nora mean by a 'till-the-next-time sort of look'?"

"I don't know, dear," said Lina absently. She was thinking of her drawing and did not notice the words; but after Kitty had gone to put her orphan to bed the words came back to Lina, and she did know. Yes, that had always been her feeling when Nora had begged her pardon, and she began to look at things from Nora's point of view. The more she looked, the less she liked the picture, and she had almost come to the conclusion that it was she who owed Nora an apology, when her troubled thoughts were most pleasantly interrupted. Her dearest school-friend, whom she had imagined miles away, walked into the yard as naturally as if there were a next door and she were living in it, and, after the rapturous meeting was over, told Lina that she had come with her mother the day before to a boarding-house not a mile away.



"THE LITTLE DUCK ATE OUT OF THE SILVER SPOON."

See Page 78.

"I begged mamma," said Nelly, "so hard that she gave up going to Newport, and came here instead; wasn't it good of her? And *do* you think Mrs. Denison would give us a room at the farm-house? Just one room would do, for I always sleep with mamma; and she's coming this afternoon to see."

Mrs. Heath, Nelly's mother, was a widow, and Nelly was her only child. She had long been an intimate friend of Mrs. Cheston, and the friendship between Nelly and Lina was entirely approved by both mothers. Nelly's happy, confiding disposition had a very good effect upon Lina, who was inclined to be despondent as well as dreamy, and Lina's love of study and reading often influenced Nelly, who did not care much for either.

The little girls talked happily together for a while, and then Lina could not help pouring out her troubles to Nelly, who listened sympathizingly, but told Lina candidly that she thought Nora had some little cause for being so provoking.

"I must go now," said Nelly at last, rising from the sofa in the little parlor, where Lina had taken her for a comfortable "talk." "But, Lina, I'm going to tell you mamma's secret: she told it to me one day when I asked her how she always knew just the nicest things to say and do to everybody;" and, sitting down again for a moment, Nelly drew Lina's face close to hers and whispered, "*Put yourself in his place;*" and then ran away before Lina could answer her.

The few words "fitly spoken" decided Lina. She walked down to the river-bank after dinner, knowing that Nora was making a sketch there, and waited for her to come. She had not long to wait. Nora, who had left her sketching materials on the bank when the dinner-bell rang, came slowly down the path. She was pulling the petals from a daisy, saying as she pulled them, "I will, I won't—I will, I won't," and did not see Lina until she almost fell over her. She too had been thinking. Charlie had more influence over her than he knew, and, after her usual whimsical fashion, she decided to leave it to the daisy, which fortunately ended with "I will" just as she stumbled upon Lina. Without wasting time she caught Lina round the neck, exclaiming, "I beg your pardon, Lina—there!"

"Oh, you didn't hurt me, dear," said Lina pleasantly, thinking the apology was for the stumble, and rather wondering at Nora's politeness.

Nora began to laugh. "You're just like the Looking-glass King," she said, "when Alice said, 'I beg your pardon?' because she didn't hear, and he said, 'I'm not offended.' What I meant was, I beg your pardon about the pictures. I know I was mean, but if you'll forgive me really and truly, I'll never make another picture about you—at least not a making-fun-of-you picture—as long as I live."

Lina returned Nora's hug heartily. "Why, *I* was just going to beg *your* pardon!" she said. "I forgave you long ago, and I've



"PUT YOURSELF IN HIS PLACE."

See Page 81.

been thinking that perhaps I've 'aggravated' you nearly as much as you have me. But I'm very glad you've promised about the pictures, dear. I almost felt as if you must hate me or you wouldn't behave so."

"No, I didn't ever *hate* you," answered Nora, balancing herself on Lina's knee, "but you see, Lina, you always act as if Dick and I were so very little, instead of being the next to the oldest. And I didn't really think how mean it was to draw those pictures till Sub said something yesterday— What did he know about it, anyhow, Lina?"

"He only knew I was angry with you about one of your pictures," answered Lina, "but he didn't see it, for I rubbed it right out."

"I 'most wish he *had* seen it," said Nora, a little regretfully: "I think it was the best I ever did, and he would have laughed—he couldn't have helped himself. But I really do mean to try to do better, and if you'll only just not talk down to me quite so much, Lina— You know I'm 'most eleven, and somehow, when you do it, I always want to provoke you; and I generally do," she added meditatively.

"I know I have been cross," said Lina, "and I dare say you and Dick could have helped me with the others if I hadn't snubbed you so; but I'll try to realize your age in future, ma'am, and you must try to make allowance for my youth."

Then they both laughed and kissed each other very heartily, and

Nora said earnestly, "There was something else I wanted to say, Lina. I mean to help you with the mending, and make the beds too."

"Oh no, dear; that wouldn't be fair. You know I offered to take your share of the mending if you'd make both beds, for I do hate making beds worse than anything."

"Yes, but I don't mind it at all, it's such fun to shake up the pillows; and I think one reason mamma wanted me to help you was that I might learn; so I'm going to do mine and Baby's after this, if you'll show me how to put the patches and things."

"That's very good of you, dear," said Lina, kissing her again, and not mentioning that of all the mending she disliked Baby's least; it was almost like making dolls' clothes.

They walked back arm in arm, carrying the sketching-things between them. Mrs. Cheston was on the piazza, and Nora marched up to her, still holding Lina's arm. Polly was standing on a chair under the trees, reaching up for her shuttlecock, which had caught among the branches, and Lina thought her presence would silence Nora, who had a great dislike to being reproved or owning herself in the wrong before "the children;" but Nora was thoroughly in earnest this time, and no number of children would have stopped her. "Mamma," she said, "I ought to have told you before what ailed Lina to let us go out there. I drew a picture she didn't like—and I don't wonder she didn't;" and Nora laughed a little at the recollection of the picture—"and that made her cry and get angry



"POLLY WAS STANDING ON A CHAIR."

See Page 86.

and not look at us ; but I'm not going to draw any more of that kind, and you can trust me at the beach now without you. Lina has forgiven me ; so will you please forgive me too, mamma?"

Nobody ever had to ask this question twice for the same offence, and in this family forgiving meant forgetting ; so Mr. Cheston, who came up the step just then, having pulled Polly and the shuttlecock out of the tree in passing, met such a warm and joyful welcome that he said he thought he must have fallen asleep and stayed away a year instead of a day ; and it was a very festive tea-drinking that followed, for everybody had something so excellent to suggest about the arrangements for the coming week that Mrs. Denison came over to the cottage after tea to see what was the matter, saying that it sounded at her house like a "treeful of blackbirds."



CHAPTER V.

A FESTIVAL WEEK.



RS. DENISON had allowed herself to be persuaded to take Mrs. Heath and her little daughter into the farm-house, and all the children rejoiced over adding Nelly to their number, for she was a general favorite, and it was considered especially fortunate that she had arrived just in time for the festivities which were to be crowded into Mr. Cheston's holiday

week. He preferred taking the other three weeks of his holiday late in the fall, that so he might "feel the good of it" through the winter. After a great deal of discussing the order of things was finally settled. Everybody agreed upon keeping the best for the last, and, which was much more strange, had the same views as to what was the best. The programme had been settled upon weeks before, all but the order of events. There was to be the clambake and the sail and the picnic. The sail was a very good

thing—for those who liked sailing; but Mrs. Cheston and Mrs. Heath both said they were “free to confess” that they would rather be excused, and Nora said if she must hang upside down and hold on, she would rather do it on dry land than on the water. The very little ones could not go, of course. So the sailing-party was arranged for Monday, because Mr. Denison had announced that the great meadow near the house was to be mowed that day, and the younger children were quite consoled for losing the sail by the prospect of a day’s haying, for the farmer told them that he should want all the *help* he could get.

The clambake was to take place on Wednesday, and the picnic on Friday. This arrangement would give people a chance to rest between the entertainments and before Sunday, and would also leave a margin in case of rainy days.

So it was a very happy and hopeful colony which fell asleep on Saturday night under Farmer Denison’s two roofs, and Mr. and Mrs. Cheston reaped the benefit of their loving interest in, and sympathy with, the children’s plans all Sunday, for everything was so fully arranged and settled that the little people entered heartily into the Sunday services and the school, which were always held in the great barn. Week-day school was over; there was a happy feeling of well-earned repose that Sunday morning, and Mrs. Denison, sitting in her large arm-chair by the parlor-window, resting from her manifold labors, listened with a pleased smile as “Onward, Christian Soldier!” rang up to the rafters, and echoed

back again. Lina and Nora, holding the same hymn-book, exchanged loving glances as they sang, each with a thankful feeling that they had "made up" when they had.

Monday morning brought with it weather as brilliantly clear as the most exacting heart could desire, and the sailing-party went off amid a volley of cheers, partly their own and partly the generous offering of the stay-at-homes, who were quite as glad to stay as the others were to go; for Mrs. Denison, to their great delight, had told them that in consideration of the "busy day" she was going to have, she would be very much obliged to them indeed if they would put up with a cold dinner, and save her and Martha the trouble of setting tables by eating it under the trees that bordered the hay-field. This struck them as being so truly delightful that there was a great exchanging of wasted pity at the pier as the haymakers saw the sailors off.

Mr. Cheston, Lina, Nelly Heath, Charlie, Dick, and Kitty composed the sailing-party. Kitty had shown such a pitiful face at the suggestion that she belonged to the hay-party, and had promised so solemnly to sit perfectly still and mind every word papa said, that Lina had gained a real victory over herself, before anybody but her mother had noticed that there was a struggle, and had promised to "go security" for Kitty for the day. How the blue water sparkled and danced as the boat put off! There was a fine breeze, and Mr. Denison said he didn't mind having his hay blown about a little when he saw that sail fill.



"MARTHA BROUGHT HER MENDING-BASKET OUT."

See Page 95.

Martha Denison, who was a great friend of the children, brought her mending-basket out to a shady corner of the hay-field when her morning work in the house was "done up;" and Rob, after burying Polly and being buried himself until he was too warm and tired to play any more, lay down at Martha's feet on a cushion of sweet hay, with Polly beside him, and coaxed so flatteringly for "a story" that Martha gracefully yielded.

"I'll tell you a story that my Uncle Joe used to tell me," said Martha, "and then you can see if you can guess who it was about. I made Uncle Joe tell me it so many times that I can say it off like a lesson."

And she told Uncle Joe's story in his own words:

The spring mother had her long illness Betty and I were standing by her chair one evening when she was beginning to get well, and Betty took hold of her hand and noticed how loose her rings hung on it. One was her wedding-ring, and the other was an old chased ring she had worn ever since we could remember; and in case you don't know about that sort of chasing quite so well as about the chasing in "I Spy," and "Prisoner's Base," I will just tell you that it had a curious pattern of flowers and leaves deeply *scratched* on it—so deeply that the wear and rubbing of seventy or eighty years had not smoothed it. Think of that, and of how you are scratching habits on your mind and heart every day!

"Yes," said mother, "it was your great-grandma's ring, and then

it was your grandma's, and now it's mine ; and it will be yours some day, Betty, if I don't lose it first."

"I don't want it, mother, not a bit," said Betty—"at least, not that way—but it's ever so pretty, isn't it, Joe?" and she handed the ring to me to let me see it.

"Suppose," said mother, "that the man who made that had scratched snakes and things on it, instead of flowers and leaves?"

"That would have been very horrid of him," said Betty, "to make ugly things when he had the beautiful gold and the tools, and could make pretty things just as well as not ; besides, I don't believe anybody would have wanted it, except just for the gold, then."

"And yet," said mother, "when folks have no more sense than to let ugly tempers and bad habits mark them all up they don't seem to think that the only sort of love they'll get will be because they're somebody's child or sister or brother, and that even the dear Lord, instead of loving them with the special love He keeps for His obedient children, can only love them because they are sinners and He died for them."

Betty didn't say anything, but I had a great fancy for wood-carving just then, and I said I'd be very careful only to carve pretty things. Father had just come in, and he said he'd believe that when he saw me finish one thing before I began another. I didn't like that much—there was too much truth in it—and I dragged Betty off to play. Father used to say he thought Betty must have the

will that was intended for both of us; she always knew what she meant to do, and it took a good deal to keep her from doing it, but I was so full of grand plans and intentions that somehow very few of them came to anything.

A few days after the talk about the ring, as we were sitting at the dinner-table, Betty said suddenly, "Why, mother, where's your ring?"

Mother looked down at her hand: the old chased ring was gone! She was puzzled at first to think how it could have slipped off without her noticing it, and then she said, "There! I as good as know where it is, but I doubt if I ever see it again. I was loosening up the straw in my under-bed this morning, and it was so flat I concluded it was about time it was fresh filled; and your father and Jake took it right out to the barn and filled it for me. You know the ring has been loose ever since I was ill, and I haven't a doubt I rubbed it off into that straw.—Could you show me where you threw it, father?"

"Why, yes," said father; "we shook it out in a clean corner of the barnyard, right by the wall, but it would take you all day and all night to sort over that great bedful of straw, and you don't look quite rosy enough to suit me yet. I can't have you making yourself ill again for all the rings in Christendom."

"Let us look, mother," said Betty eagerly. "To-morrow is Saturday, and we'll find it if it takes all day—won't we, Joe?"

"Well, we'll try," I said, not quite so eagerly; "but just think,

Betty, all that straw, and such a little thing as a ring! It's 'most like the needle in the haystack."

"Suppose it is?" said Betty. "Anybody who was in real down earnest could find a needle in a haystack if they went to work the right way; and you'll see we'll find that ring if you'll just go to work with me the way I show you."

Betty was a little too fond of "showing" and giving directions to suit me, so I said, not very pleasantly, "I'll help you look, but you seem to forget I'm two years older than you are. I don't need to be told how to do everything."

"There's something you both need to be told," said mother briskly; "and that is, that if you are going to quarrel over this piece of work neither of you shall touch it. A temper is a worse thing to lose than a ring."

"I oughtn't to have spoken that way, Joe; I'm sorry," said Betty, after a minute's struggle with herself; she was an honest little thing.

"I suppose I oughtn't, either," I said; "so we'll call it square. But you ought to be President, Bet; there's a mistake somewhere."

"Maybe I shall be one of these days; there's no telling;" and Betty nodded her head wisely.

"Somebody said once that it was better to be right than to be President," said father, "so we'll all run for that."

We began at the straw right after breakfast the next day. Betty

didn't want me to think her too presidential, I suppose, so she said nothing more about her plan, but quietly carried it out. She separated a small bunch of straw from the rest, and then, with an old brass stair-rod which she had brought from the garret, she carefully picked away a little of the loose straw at a time, very much as if she were playing jack-straws. I was poking about with both hands at once, and feeling a little injured at having to work on a holiday.

"What's that for?" I said.

"So's to make a noise if it hits the ring," said Betty, a little grandly, I thought. "You know my fingers wouldn't sound if they struck it ever so hard, and when I have been feeling a while they'll be so rough I won't know straw from ring. I'll get you one if you like; there's more of 'em up garret."

"No, thank you," I said; and I was even grander than she'd been. "I think I should know if I found the ring, without a brass rod to tell me."

Betty made no answer, but worked industriously on. When a small bundle had been thoroughly picked over she would carry it quite away from the heap; and this pile of sorted straw began to look encouraging. She paid no more attention to me, and directly I saw she was taking her little sheaves from where I had been poking. It was a warm day, and I wasn't in the best of humors; so I said crossly, "If you're going to go over all I do there's no use in my fooling the whole day away, like this. I looked through that

very bunch you've just taken, and you'll be all night if you keep on that way."

Betty made no answer, and I got up and marched away in a huff. She worked on till dinner-time; then after dinner, and a half hour's rest that mother made her take, she went back. I was gone, and so was my fishing-rod. Only a few armfuls of straw were left, and Betty's arms must have been tired enough, when she heard something clink; there was a bright gleam through the straw, and there was the ring! Betty rushed into the house with a shout of joy and put the ring on mother's finger.

"You've earned it, my dear," said mother, giving her a hearty kiss, "and just as soon as your finger grows big enough to hold it you shall have it; but you've gained something better than rings, I trust. With God's help and a good will there's few things in reason that can't be done."

The three very small fish I brought home at tea-time didn't give me any great satisfaction, and after tea, as we sat on the porch in the twilight, I whispered to mother, "I should think you'd be ashamed of me, mother, and wish Bet was the boy; but I'm going to let that old ring keep me in mind, and I'll be much obliged to you if you will just hold up the finger that has it on when you catch me shirking again."

"There's something that will do you more good than the ring, my boy," said mother, stroking my head kindly. "When you say 'Lead us not into temptation' every morning, just think what

your temptation is, and don't walk into it after praying not to be led into it."

I hope and trust I took a fresh start from that day, and when I fell back a little, as I often did, the old ring did remind me many a time, and the sight of it helped mother's words to take root.

"And now," said Martha, dropping her uncle Joe and speaking in her own proper person again, "can you guess who Betty is?"

Martha's audience had increased since she began her story. First, little Tom had crept up, and at a warning "Hush-sh-sh!" from Polly had dropped on a pile of hay and gone peacefully to sleep, waking only as the story ended; then Nora had sauntered by, and stopped at the sound of Martha's voice; and, lastly, Mrs. Denison, coming out with some of the dinner-arrangements, had waited, smiling, for Martha to finish.

"It was Mrs. Denison: see how she's blushing!" shouted Rob; and then everybody laughed and jumped up to help spread the cloth and put the "cold victuals" on it.

The children's mothers told Mrs. Denison it was a good thing she did not give them their dinners out of doors every day—they would "eat her out of house and home." Rob ate six large biscuits by "actual count," not to mention meat and milk and sponge-cake and a few other trifles, and everybody said they were sure things were different from the every-day dinners.

When at last this ravenous community was satisfied, the mothers

said the least they could do was to clear up after themselves, so there was a grand dish-washing, presided over by good-natured Martha, and then a procession to carry the things back to the house.

Then Nora retired to a sheltered corner and sketched the hay-field and tried to write a poem. She got as far as

“Over the hill the farmer’s boy goes,”

and then racked her brain for a rhyme which should also have a meaning.

She tried “toes” and “nose” and “rose,” and they all rhymed beautifully, but she could not think of any connection between his toes or his nose or a rose and haymaking—the poem was to be about haymaking—except that a rose-cold was sometimes called a hay-cold, and that was not at all poetical. While she was engaged with this absorbing puzzle she fell fast asleep, and had a lovely nap, from which she was wakened by Polly tickling her (Nora’s) nose with one of the wild roses which Rob and Polly had been gathering while the poet slumbered; it was a very curious coincidence, Nora thought, and she triumphantly added the second line to her poem:

“Tickling his nose with a newly-blown rose.”

The two together sounded so well that she couldn’t help telling them to Rob and Polly, who admired the couplet greatly, and made



"ROB AND POLLY GATHERING WILD ROSES.

See Page 102.

her repeat it two or three times. She was trying to work out a second rhyme when a call for volunteers to help make ready for the early supper cut her short, and she decided to wait until the next day before completing her poem. The supper, by special request, was to be spread where the dinner had been, and if anything could have been more surprising than the way that dinner disappeared, it was the fact that every one was as hungry for supper as if the dinner had been a dream.

Meanwhile, the sailing-party were having a very gay time indeed. The fresh wind whisked them up the river at such a rate that they reached the island where they were to dine entirely too soon, and were really obliged to keep on for a mile or two and then come "tacking" back. Mr. Cheston managed the sails, and Charlie distinguished himself as steersman. Kitty was the only other distinguished member of the party. She was a little bit frightened, although she would not for the world have acknowledged it; but the waves were really quite high—delightfully high, the rest of the children thought—and as the little boat *heeled* with the wind, the children fancied they knew just how flies felt when they walked upside-down on the ceiling.

Kitty had been put in the bow of the boat, with a strict injunction to "sit perfectly still," and she had an idea that the general safety depended a good deal upon her obedience to orders; so, when an unusually frolicsome little wave leaped up to break over the bow, although everybody but papa—whose head was turned the other

way—screamed “Dodge, Kitty, dodge!” Kitty sat perfectly still, and the wave struck her curly head with a precision that did it credit. They wiped her off as well as they could, consoling her with the assurance that salt water didn’t give people cold, and papa compared her to the immortal “boy” who “stood on the burning deck,” and then was obliged to recite the whole poem because Kitty had never even heard of the boy.

“I don’t think I was *quite* that brave,” said Kitty modestly, “for it doesn’t hurt to get wet, but it must hurt dreadfully to ‘in fragments strew the sea.’ Oh, I wonder if every fragment hurt all at once, papa?” and her lip quivered so pitifully that papa hastened to assure her that the poor “boy” had ceased to feel anything long before he was in fragments; and in the interest of landing, and building a fire, and putting the potatoes to roast, and dressing the salad, and finding the spring, and making the lemonade—at all of which enterprises Kitty assisted more or less—the luckless boy was soon forgotten.

It seemed to these hungry sailors that potatoes required a great deal of roasting, but they were done at last, and so was the little pot of coffee which Lina had been carefully making for her father, and which, he told her, “did equal credit to her head and heart.” There was plenty of milk for the rest of the party, and lemonade for those who did not like milk, and for those that did too, for that matter; and when Mr. Cheston mildly suggested that two glasses of lemonade after three or four of milk *might* necessitate a third

course composed of ginger and peppermint, he was assured in chorus, "Oh, not at a picnic, papa! Folks can eat anything when they're out of doors, you know."

Papa looked doubtful, but as nobody called for the third course, it is probable nobody wanted it.

The island was found to be inhabited. Lina, wandering about trying to fix upon the prettiest point for a sketch, surprised a little rabbit family, and she stood still so instantly, and concealed herself so skilfully, that the pretty creatures, unaware of her presence, went on with their graceful gambols, and she took their likeness with trembling haste and the usual dissatisfied feeling that she was not doing them justice. Other inhabitants were found—a family of tiny squirrels and a nest of dreadful-looking little birds without any feathers worth mentioning; indeed, these looked so uncomfortably bare, and clamored so for the worms with which their distracted parents were trying to satisfy them, that Kitty said she *knew* somebody had skinned them.

Many wonderful and beautiful things, in the way of moss and wild flowers and pebbles, were also discovered, until Mr. Cheston said they would be obliged to swim home if the boat's cargo were further increased. Kitty insisted upon washing out one of the numerous empty milk-bottles and filling it with water from the spring "for mamma," because that water was so very much better than any at the farm, and no amount of laughter from the children shook her purpose.

But the loveliest thing of all was making the fire up again and boiling the kettle—a real tea-kettle, from the farm-house kitchen—for the early tea, which was to fortify them for the exertion of sailing home. To be sure, nobody but papa drank “real tea,” but everybody knows that to make cambric tea properly one must have boiling water. How extremely gypsy-like they all felt, standing round the blazing fire waiting for the kettle to boil! They wished they could live this way always, and fairly jumped for joy when Mr. Cheston said that possibly, perhaps, if it were not too cold, and mamma would permit it, they *might* camp out for a night or two on the island during his three weeks’ vacation.

When supper was over the dishes were carefully washed and packed by so many willing hands that the work seemed light indeed, for the Cheston boys had no fear of compromising their dignity with “woman’s work;” what dignity they had was of the sort that would have felt itself wounded had they sat idle while mother or sisters were doing work of any sort which their help could lighten.

Then came the lovely sail home. The swift current of the river seemed running under a sheet of glass. The light from the sunset sky shone with an added brightness from the water. Mr. Cheston began singing the “Canadian Boat-song;” one by one the children joined in, and as they finished, and were all feeling very poetical and dreamy and musical, Kitty said with a



"A TINY WHITE-AND-GRAY KITTEN CONFRONTED THEM."

See Page 111.

deep sigh, "Oh, if mamma were *only* here! *That* wouldn't have frightened her a bit;" which heartfelt compliment to their singing raised a shout of laughter—it does not take much to do that when people are happy—and Kitty, indignant at being misunderstood, exclaimed as soon as she could be heard, "I don't see what you are all laughing at."

But Kitty was a forgiving little person, and used to being laughed at besides; so no harm was done, and they sang themselves all the way home in the lovely summer twilight, and found an admiring audience waiting for them at the pier. As the haymaking and the sailing-parties were walking slowly home, telling each other all about everything and pitying each other a little for having missed such a good time, Kitty, who was in advance, suddenly stopped short with a delighted little "Oh!" Everybody else stopped too, and looked for the obstruction. It was so small that they all looked over it at first, and then they all laughed, for a tiny gray-and-white kitten confronted them with a look of fierce determination which was funnily out of proportion to its size. It had been stopped short in the chase of a pretty moth—which wisely took advantage of the diversion to escape—and was justly indignant. Kitty claimed it on the ground of discovery, and when her mother suggested that perhaps Mrs. Denison might object to any addition to the menagerie, Kitty said gravely, "I heard papa say, 'What cat's averse to fish?' mamma, when he caught Polly's kitten trying to steal the clam-fritters; and I shall

just dig clams for this lovely— Oh! oh! somebody has cut her tail off!”

Kitty's howl was so sudden and startling that for a moment they thought an ambushed enemy had suddenly sprung out upon her and committed this dire deed; but as the kitten, having discovered that it was among friends, was purring loudly, they were completely puzzled, until, reaching the farm-house door, they saw in the light which streamed out that this imposing-looking kitten—when you saw her “head on”—had indeed only the merest apology for a tail—a little stub which looked as if she had borrowed it from a rabbit.

Mrs. Denison laughed heartily when she heard Kitty's lamentation. “My dear,” she said, “it's one of that Manx cat's family. A Manx cat came ashore on a shipwrecked vessel down at our beach a good many years ago, and her descendants are all about the neighborhood. Some of them have these little rabbit-tails, like the first one, and some have tails two or three inches long, but they all have those great long hind legs like rabbits, and people think they're more sensible than common cats. The folks that come to board around here in summer often take them home, but not as often as they'd like to, for the race is dying out, and the owners don't always care to part with them.”

“Then I suppose this sweet little rabbit-kitty belongs to somebody?” said Kitty, rather dolefully and hugging her treasure tight.

“I think I know where she strayed from,” answered Mrs. Deni-

son. "But don't you worry, my dear; the old lady's a friend of mine—her owner, I mean, not her mother—and there's several more of 'em—of the kittens, that is—and I think I can get this one for you without any trouble."

So, very tired, but blissfully happy, Kitty arranged a bed for little Manx, and then went to her own—an example which the rest of the family were not long in following.

8



CHAPTER VI.

THE CLAMBAKE.



GENERAL disposition to lie on hay-cushions and do nothing particular was manifested by the sailors next day, and the people who had not sailed must have been very easily influenced, for, after a virtuous effort to sew and write and read, they gradually subsided into idleness. Martha, whose hearty sympathy with all their plans generally took some active and tangible form, had

insisted upon taking the entire charge of the mending that week, declaring that she really wanted some sewing, and that it would be too bad for them to have to sew when Mr. Cheston was only there for a week. The kind-hearted girl was so entirely in earnest about it that she carried her point, and both Mrs. Cheston and Lina enjoyed this holiday week to the full.

Mrs. Denison declared that she must not be interfered with in her arrangements for the clambake. She and Mr. Denison had promised to come down to the beach in time to join the party at supper, and Martha was to be with them all the afternoon, having undertaken to superintend the baking. That all the baking was not to be done to the clams was made evident by the savory odors which flew from time to time across the hay-field from the farm-house kitchen; but Mrs. Denison merely replied to the various complimentary remarks which ended with an interrogation-point with which she was assailed when they came to the farm-house at tea-time, by saying that she'd been baking them a gingerbread loaf, and there it was!

The gingerbread, or something, proved so refreshing that after tea they all strolled down to the beach and settled themselves comfortably upon shawls spread on the sand, for it had been a warm day and the coolness of the sea-breeze was very refreshing. It was still broad daylight, for the days were only a little past the longest, and tea was always ready punctually at six o'clock, which left them a good long evening.

Kitty, who had been sitting thoughtfully silent, suddenly exclaimed, "Papa, how did the very first Manx cat lose his tail?"

"I don't know 'exactly,' as the White Queen says, Pussy," said papa, "but, if you like, I can imagine a way, and you can pretend it is true."

"That will do just as well, thank you, papa," said Kitty con-

tentedly—"better, for I like your 'imagines' more than I do real things, and I think Manx will like to hear it too."

Whereupon it was discovered that Kitty had her new treasure tucked under her shawl.

"I brought her down to see the ocean," explained Kitty; "I want her to remember it after we go home, so that I can talk to her about it."

"I want Nora to make me a picture for my story," said Mr. Cheston.—"Come, Miss O'Neil, a little way off here, where they can't see you drawing, and we'll burst it upon them, as it were: it is a picture which must be made to order."

Mr. Cheston knew, of course, all about the little picture-difficulty between Nora and Lina, and he knew that to any one with Nora's keen sense of fun and aptitude for expressing it in pictures the promise she had made involved no little self-denial. The small artist was fully as much gratified with his request as he thought she would be, and sprang up joyfully to comply with it.

A sharp stick was found, consultation and drawing went rapidly on, and when Nora finished with a triumphant "There!" Mr. Cheston called the audience up to admire, and began the story. It was a rough sketch, of course, done in the sand with a sharp stick, but it was full of spirit, and the audience applauded heartily. The animals, of which there were five, needed no labels to be recognized as four little foxes and a large cat. One of the foxes had the cat's tail in a vicious grip, and the poor cat's mouth



"ONE OF THE FOXES HAD THE CAT'S TAIL IN HIS GRIP."

See Page 116.

was open, evidently for the purpose of giving an agonized "Meow!" The other three little foxes were looking serenely on, and in front of the cat stood a generously large dish of broken victuals.

The audience, having complied with a polite request to move their shawls and themselves to within seeing distance of the picture, were respectfully silent while the narrator proceeded with the following story :

"A sailor who had a remarkable fondness for animals, and who lived so many years ago that nothing more is known about him, owned a very large and handsome black cat which was petted and played with by every one on board the ship. You may object that the cat in the illustration is not black, but if you consider this a real objection and will remain here until after dark, you will find that it is entirely so. This sailor discovered a family of little foxes on one of the islands at which his vessel touched, and being, as I remarked, fond of animals, and being fortunate enough to call when the old foxes happened to be from home, he gathered up the interesting family, none of whom was over a foot long, and brought them with him to the ship. The cat felt so entirely secure in his position on board the ship that he smiled tolerantly on the pretty little animals and treated them with great politeness, even enticing them into the small room in which he was always fed, and offering, so soon as they should feel a desire for anything besides milk, to share his mess with them. The little foxes were humble, meek, obliging creatures

apparently, but as they became familiar with the cat he often observed things about them which startled and annoyed him. They suggested to him how easily he could 'take'—they never said 'steal'—from the pantry and the table; they wondered he did not resent the good-humored teasing of the sailors, and that he did not dispose of his master's parrot when it received so much more attention than he did. If they saw that he appeared shocked by any of these suggestions, they hastened to add that they were 'only in fun;' and the cat argued with himself that it did not do to be over-particular, that he had been lonely before the foxes came, and that he might enjoy their company without agreeing with their opinions or learning their manners and customs. His doubts as to the wisdom of this course of proceeding grew suddenly much greater when, for the first time, they accepted his courteous invitation to dinner. Their greediness was appalling; they managed, by engaging him in conversation one at a time while the others ate, to so nearly deprive him of his dinner that he began to reflect seriously about withdrawing from their society. But this he now found impossible. No matter to what cozy corner of the ship he retired, one or more of his new friends was sure to follow him with flattering speeches which disarmed the reserve with which he tried to treat them. In former times he could have escaped them by climbing the rigging, but it was so long since he had attempted this that he found himself clumsy and timid, and had the mortification of falling once or twice in his efforts to rid himself of his undesirable

associates; and, although they were outwardly full of sympathy and kindness over these mishaps, he somehow felt convinced that inwardly they were laughing at him. Matters at last came to such a pass that he resolved to stand upon his rights. He guarded his plate one day until his master filled it—for more than once of late he had obeyed his master's call only to find the plate empty and his friends licking their chops—and then he made a speech. He remarked that there were limits to the privileges of friendship; that those limits in his case had been reached; that henceforth he must request his friends to be satisfied with the rations provided by their master, and to leave him to a peaceful enjoyment of his meals; that he would prefer no longer giving up, or even sharing, his bed; and that upon compliance with these conditions only could their friendship remain unbroken. The foxes listened with smiling attention, and agreed with him in everything that he said—all but one, who, unperceived, had stolen behind him as he spoke, and who now, at a signal from the rest, seized him quickly by the tail, and despite his enraged howls held him firmly back from his plate, while the other three made quick work with his dinner. But there is a sort of honor even among thieves; the three conspirators who had possession of the plate left a share for the watchman, and then one of them went to relieve guard while the other took his share. The cat, enraged beyond all bounds at the cool impudence with which the plot was being carried out, made a spring as his new tormentor seized him and broke loose; but, alas! he left his beautiful tail in

the mouth of his captor. Nothing remained but an unsightly stump an inch or two long. The rage and mortification of the poor cat were beyond expression, and he spent the rest of the voyage chiefly in the rigging, which he once more learned to climb, and whence, whenever he could catch one of his false friends alone, he 'dropped on' him with terrible effect. This was not often, for the foxes' cunning served them instead of strength, and they stuck together so constantly that the cat grew gloomy and morose, watching for chances for revenge.

"Of course, poor Pussy's tail never grew again, and most of his descendants have shared his misfortune. The exercise he took in the rigging lengthened and strengthened his hind legs, until they were both longer and stronger than those of cats usually are; and this trait also is preserved in the family. The cat effected a landing as soon after his misfortune as was possible. The island where he made his escape was called 'the Isle of Man,' and there, to this day, his descendants may be found under the name of 'Manx cats.'"

"In my *Æsop's Fables*, papa," said Kitty, "there is always a moral. Isn't there any moral to this? I think it would be a *very* nice story if it only had a moral."

"I hoped," said papa meekly, "that the moral stuck out all over that story like the quills upon the fretful porcupine."

"I think it did, papa," said Lina and Charlie in a breath: the family often noticed that these two had a way of hitting on the same thought at the same time.

"I am glad somebody appreciated me," exclaimed papa, rising so suddenly that Kitty, who was sitting very near him, found herself rolling over on the smooth sand; "and for those obtuse persons who did not I will give the moral in the words of the poet:

'Tell me with whom you go,
And I'll tell you what you do.'

The rhyme is open to criticism, but the sentiment must atone for it."



As they strolled slowly home through the green lane which bordered the hay-field they overtook the last load of hay, just starting for the barn, and the boys begged so earnestly for "a ride" that the good-natured farmer, whose strength was nearly

equal to his good-nature, seized Rob and tossed him up as if he had been a feather. But Master Rob, taken by surprise, failed to effect a landing, and turned a back somersault, which would probably have been his last had not the farmer, with a sudden jump, dexterously caught him. While he was in the air, however, a shriek arose from his sisters and Nelly Heath, which brought Mrs. Denison in wild terror to the hay-field; and Mr. Cheston kindly but very seriously told the girls how much mischief a scream sometimes did in any sudden danger, and that self-control and readiness under emergencies were arts which could be learned and practised even by weak and timid people. The ride on the hay-wagon was given up for that evening, and everybody felt a little sobered by Rob's momentary danger, until Kitty suddenly exclaimed, "The moral of *that* is, papa, that little boys oughtn't to go where they can't hold on."

There was a general laugh, and Kitty was addressed as "The Duchess" from that time—a title which she evidently enjoyed and considered highly honorable to her small person.



CHAPTER VII.

THE CLAMBAKE, CONTINUED.



THE little phœbe-bird which every morning plaintively called "Phœ-be! Phœ-be!" in the cherry tree by the children's windows did not get up early enough to call them on the morning of that "glorious Fourth" which was to be made memorable by the clambake. One would have thought that an emigrant-train was to be started, and that the whole responsibility rested upon those children. By eight o'clock breakfast was over, and the blue-flannel brigade drawn up on the porch, anxiously awaiting the "hay-shelvings" which kind Mr. Denison had suggested as a suitable conveyance to the beach. No matter in how many stately coaches those boys and girls may some day ride, I do not believe they will regard any of them with the rapture which forced a shout of applause from them as the horses

drawing the huge open wagon pranced up to the door, and they swarmed in and settled themselves upon the cushions of fragrant hay, which were all the seats this stately conveyance boasted. It was amazing what an amount of luggage every one had. Mrs. Cheston and Mrs. Heath, under the delusion that they were going to sew while the children played, had their work-baskets, and also books to read aloud to each other. Lina and Nelly and Nora had a vast amount of drawing arrangements, among which, to every one's great amusement, was Nora's easel. But nobody even hinted that she had better leave it at home, for one especial bargain about this festivity had been that there was to be no interference between the children, and Mr. Denison had suggested to Mr. Cheston that the hay-wagon would solve all difficulties by providing room for everything and everybody. Mr. Cheston had made an address while they were "waiting for the wagon," beginning, curiously enough, with the sentence, "All men are born free and equal, and endowed with certain inalienable rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." There is no telling how much more he meant to say, but the cheering at this point had overpowered him, and by the time it cleared off the wagon had arrived.

Do you really wish to know what all went into that wagon? Four grown-ups, nine children, two small dogs, and two kittens composed the living freight. I decline to enumerate the articles which filled in all the spaces, but will merely mention that the party

would have been comfortable for a week had they been cast—in the hay-wagon—on the most deserted of desert islands.

Dandy, who had a funny terror of all conveyances on wheels, and who had “gone on” till you might have thought “his ’owls were horgans” upon the one or two occasions when the children had coaxed him into a wagon, ran in front and behind and on both sides, as if he were four dogs instead of one, barking in the faces of the patient farm-horses, who looked at him with mild disdain and pursued the even tenor of their way very much as if he were a large fly.

Kitty and Rob and Polly and Tom had an immense parcel wrapped in a bursting newspaper, which they declared was “a secret with mamma and Charlie.” The rest expressed their disdain of a secret which included six people, but Kitty said a secret with just *one* person wasn’t worth anything at all.

To their unbounded delight, they found a fishing-boat drawn up on the beach not far from the sheltering rocks near which the tent was pitched. The old fisherman and his son were emptying a net, and the shining scales of the herring glittered in the sun. A bargain was quickly made for part of the haul, and Mr. Cheston said he would show the children how to roast the fish in hot ashes, as he used to do when he “camped out” in the Adirondacks—“in the happy days before I had eight such awful responsibilities,” he said, with so deep a sigh that the whole eight sprang upon him at once to console him, and nearly succeeded in choking him.

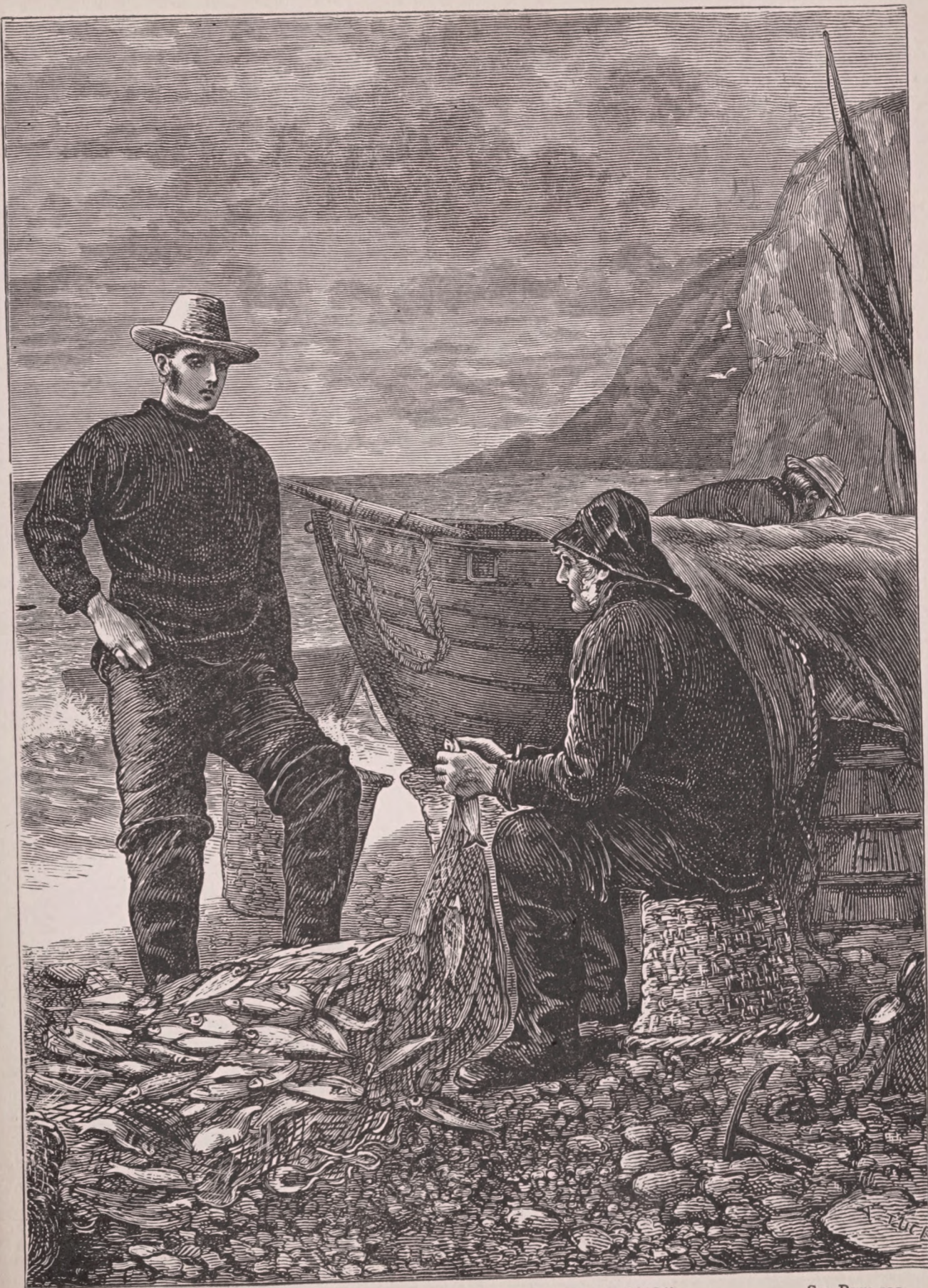
Kitty looked doubtfully at the fish. "But, papa," she said in a puzzled tone, "I always thought herrings were red—or brown, anyhow—and these are white. Don't you know what the verse says :

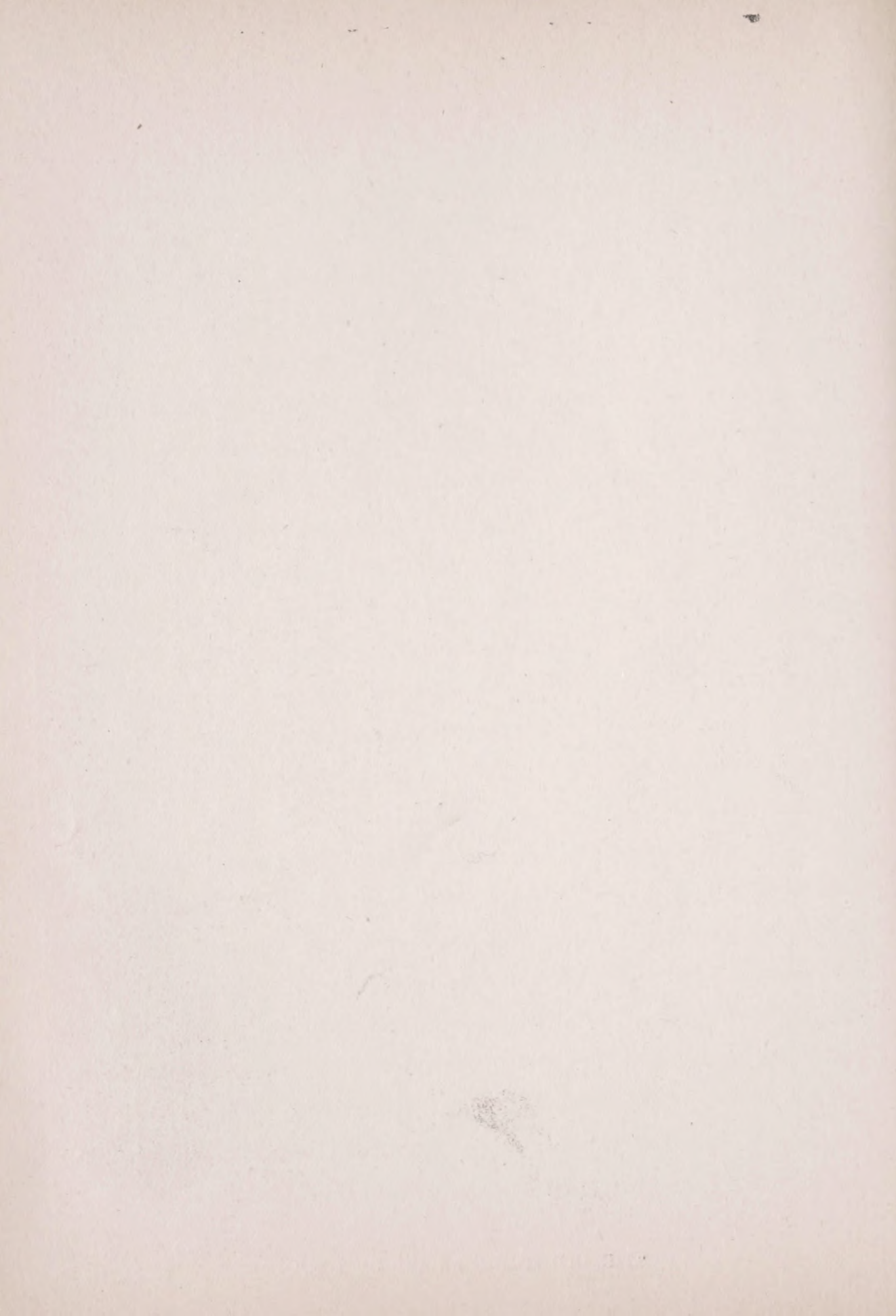
'The man of the wilderness asked me
How many strawberries grew in the sea ;
I answered him, as I thought good,
As many as red herrings grew in the wood.' "

"Perfectly correct, my dear," said papa, "but those herrings had probably been smoked, and so have the broiled ones of which you have heretofore partaken. I am going to show you a new thing in herrings when dinner-time comes."

The children scattered over the sand to their various employments. The four youngest, lugging the mysterious bundle and calling Charlie to follow them, disappeared behind the large rocks near the tent, whence presently came a sound of violent hammering, followed, after an interval of about fifteen minutes, by a triumphant shout of "*Now* you can all come and look !"

Those who were within call availed themselves of this gracious permission, and found an imposing pavilion composed of three old shawls stitched together, and supported on stout poles at a sufficient distance from the ground to allow the small people to stand and the large ones to sit underneath. The builders of this resting-place eloquently explained that it was *much* better than the tent—





first, because it was large enough to hold the entire family if they would only sit down ; and, second, because the air could get in all round. To this desirable retreat shawls and cushions and work-baskets and kittens were forthwith removed, and from it Mrs. Heath and Mrs. Cheston laughingly refused to stir when the preparations for dinner began, saying that Mr. Cheston's having volunteered as chief cook was a sufficient guarantee for the goodness of the cookery, and that they felt relieved of all responsibility. There really was nothing to cook besides the fish and the coffee for the grown-ups ; so the two "lovely and lazy ladies" were courteously requested to take possession of the tent while the pavilion should be made ready for the feast, and the children agreed that things really looked quite Oriental and stately when the cloth was spread on the smooth sand, the shawls and cushions disposed around it for seats, and the dinner tastefully spread out with the dish of smoking fish in the middle.

Toasts were drunk in coffee and lemonade ; appropriate speeches were made ; several songs were called for, and given amid such overwhelming applause that the singers had some difficulty in making themselves heard ; and a salute of fire-crackers rewarded Mr. Cheston for his brilliant success with the fish, the only trouble about which was a generally-expressed regret that he had not bought the whole haul. But he consoled them with the remark that if he had there would have been no possibility of disposing of the approaching clambake, which was

to be served, if the clams conducted themselves properly, precisely at five o'clock.

His mysterious parcel had developed eight packs of fire-crackers, and he had told Lina and Charlie that if they felt too old for fire-crackers he would dispose of their packs himself. He was not allowed this privilege, however, so he said he would be obliged to console himself with listening to them.

Polly and Rob and little Tom devoted their fire-crackers to an elaborate mining and blasting operation, which Dick, perched proudly on the stern of the little fishing-vessel, superintended and cheered, but toward which he could not contribute, having employed his crackers to fire the salute. When the mine was completely roofed over, leaving only a small passage through which the stems of numerous fire-crackers, arranged as a fuse, were carefully passed, the engineers retired to a safe distance, willingly according to Dick the privilege of applying the match.

The commotion that followed exceeded their highest hopes, and Dandy and Dot, having begun to investigate just as the explosion began, made the children laugh themselves "almost to pieces," as Kitty said, by their frantic efforts to find the unseen enemy. They succeeded in scratching down to the mine just as the volley ended, and then caused fresh laughter by their behavior over the smoke which saluted them. Dandy made short backward runs, returning with violent barks to the charge as long as the smoke continued to pour out; but Dot, who still merited his



"DICK SUPERINTENDED AND CHEERED THE OPERATION."

See Page 132.

name, and always would, stood unflinchingly at the hole, sneezing and growling alternately. Polly and Rob and Tom were quite satisfied with the returns made from the investment of their fire-crackers.

Lina and Charlie made a more ambitious but equally successful arrangement, to which Kitty, by special request, was allowed to contribute. Charlie carved a rough boat, about a foot long, out of a piece of driftwood, enclosing the crackers "between-decks," and sent it out on a retreating wave, having lighted the fuse as he started it. It went off as it sailed away on the ebbing tide, and Dandy, taking this as a fresh insult from the foe which he had considered vanquished, plunged in after it and triumphantly towed it ashore after all the crackers had exploded. It was his first venture into the water, and was greeted with shouts of applause. Having once taken the plunge, Dandy seemed rather to like it, and amid great clapping of hands, which evidently gratified him highly, and stimulated him to fresh efforts, he went in again and again after bits of wood thrown by the children, until they took pity on his fatigue and called him out. What *couldn't* Dandy do, they wondered, that ever dog had done before?

Dot was not to be persuaded so much as to wet his toes; he cocked his absurd little head and barked fiercely every time Dandy came out, but that was all.

Kitty said indignantly that it was no wonder when he was so little and the ocean was so big! Meanwhile, the little Manx

and Polly's kitten, having been refreshed with remnants of the feast, slept peacefully in the pavilion.

Martha and the clams appeared upon the scene; the call for volunteers to dig the hole for the baking was responded to by Charlie and Dick, Mr. Cheston saying that he had earned his dinner and supper both by the herring business. The hole was dug in masterly style, the fire was lighted, the hole cleared out and filled with the devoted clams and other mysteries which were known only to Martha, the covering packed tightly in, and then there was nothing more to be done until the time to "dish up" should come—except to smell it, as Kitty suggested.

So, as everybody had taken a good deal of exercise by this time, they settled down in the pavilion and begged for a story. Mr. and Mrs. Cheston both said that it was beyond a doubt Mrs. Heath's duty to provide a story for this festive occasion, that they had told every story they knew at least twice, and that it would refresh them greatly to hear an entirely new one told by somebody else.

"I will not promise an *entirely* new one," said Mrs. Heath, smiling, "but I suppose it will be allowed to pass if it is new to every one here. Let me see. When I was a small girl at school we used to give each other subjects: will anybody give me one?"

"Cats," said Kitty before anybody else had time to speak and there was a general laugh.



"THERE WAS A CAT TANGLED IN THE HARNESS OF A DOLL'S WAGON."

See Page 139.

Mrs. Heath thought a minute; then she said, "Yes, that will do very well indeed. I wonder if either of the distinguished artists present would draw me a picture?"

It was a proof of the better understanding which had come between Lina and Nora that when Mrs. Heath looked from one to the other, unwilling to make the choice herself, Lina said, simply and unenviously, "It had better be Nora, Mrs. Heath. I haven't her talent for hitting off things in a few strokes."

And Nora said eagerly, "But she makes much prettier drawings than mine, Mrs. Heath: mine are always full of mistakes."

"Still," said Mrs. Heath, "I think I have heard the children say that you can make one of your sketches very rapidly, and I am sure you did last evening; so I will nominate you this time, for fear the clams should grow tired of waiting for me to finish my story. The audience will please turn its attention to that very distant sail which is just becoming visible on the horizon until we are ready for it to look."

So Mrs. Heath dictated and Nora sketched, and the rest obediently watched the sail, until, having received permission, they turned their attention to the picture before them, fully expecting to see at least one cat. They were not disappointed; there was a cat tangled in the harness of a doll's wagon; but the principal figure was a dreadfully cross-looking little girl, who held up one hand as if she were looking at it, and had the other stuck in her eye as if she were crying.

"The name of my story," said Mrs. Heath, "is

"A LITTLE SCRATCH-CAT.

"Their names were Bessie and Tripod, and of course, since no one in his senses would name a dear little girl Tripod, Bessie was the girl and Tripod was the cat. Tripod was so named because she had only three good feet when her name was chosen, and a tripod, as some of you who go to school will know, has only three feet of any kind at any time. Her lameness grew better after a while, but she still walked with a little hitch, and Bessie, after thinking a good deal about it, had decided not to change her name.

"‘You know, mamma,’ she said, ‘Tripod hasn’t four really good feet even yet, and there’s no telling when her lame foot might get worse, and then I should be so sorry I had called her Quad-ruped, as Fred wants me to.’

"This little Bessie loved animals dearly, and was generally very good to them, but she had a fault which gave her dear mother—and in fact all the family—a great deal of trouble: she very often ‘lost her temper,’ as people say, although I think it would be nearer the truth to say that she ‘found’ it: other people certainly found it. The old lady who had given Tripod to Bessie had been very sure when she did so that the kitten was good-tempered; ‘For,’ she said, looking over her spectacles at Bessie, ‘nobody likes scratch-cats.’

"Bessie blushed and hid her face in the kitten’s soft fur. Could that old lady have known that the little girls at school sometimes

called cross people 'scratch-cats'? You might have thought that Tripod's lameness, and her very name, would have kept Bessie constantly on her guard, for it was owing to this same hasty temper of Bessie's that Tripod had to go on three feet for so long.

"A thing Bessie often did when she was angry was to slam the door as she went out, and although her mother always made her come back and shut it properly, she still seemed to find some comfort in the slamming process.

"The kitten, not long after her arrival at Bessie's home, was lying across the sill of the half-opened door, playing with her tail in a way which at any other time would have made Bessie call the whole family to 'Come and look.' But mamma had just sent her little daughter to gather up and put away the remains of a grand dolls' tea-party which had been left in wild confusion on the piazza; and Bessie, feeling very much injured at being stopped on her way to the country with her family of six children and four nurses, had expressed her feelings in the usual way. The poor kitten, frightened out of her little wits, tried in vain to get up and run in time; the slamming door caught one of her pretty white paws; there were two shrieks; I don't know what the kitten said, but Bessie screamed, 'Oh, my pussy! my pussy!' and cried all the afternoon, with Kitty, lying on the best doll's feather bed, in her lap.

"Mamma had talked very sadly with her little girl, telling her that she never could know what dreadful thing might happen if she gave way to those fits of passion. 'Suppose,' she said, 'that Baby

Nelly had been creeping on the floor, and that it had been her hand instead of pussy's paw which the door struck ?'

"Bessie cried with all her heart, and promised humbly to try to conquer her naughty temper ; and if she had kept on trying in the only right way, I do not think this story could have been told about her, for she had the strong will which high-tempered people so often have, and which, rightly used, is the cure for the bad temper. I think when St. Paul said, 'In all things *willing* to live honestly,' he did not mean just consenting ; he meant intending, earnestly purposing ; and there is a great deal in willing if we will only those things upon which we can pray for a blessing from the Almighty Will.

"For a good while after this sad day Tripod seemed to keep Bessie reminded, but then, as perhaps you know, our memories are such queer things. I have no doubt you were much longer learning your 'capitals' than you were remembering the names of all your schoolmates where you first went to school. And though you forget sometimes that to-morrow is 'composition day,' I don't believe you forgot when papa promised to take you next Wednesday week to the Zoological Gardens.

"So Bessie gradually slipped back to where she had been before she hurt Tripod, and one rainy Saturday, when Fred had mumps and was kept a prisoner in the third-story front room for fear he would give it to the other children, Bessie fretted and whined until I think it occurred to one or two of the family that it would not be

such a bad thing if she too had mumps and were consigned to the third-story back room.

“Fred dictated a note to her, and her mother faithfully wrote it down and delivered it. Fred was ten years old, and learned a ‘piece’ out of the *Speaker* once a week, so you will not be surprised that he said—

“‘MY WELL-LOVED SISTER: From my anguished couch—though I am only on the lounge, and the doctor says I may keep my coat and trousers on if I’ll be covered up too—I write—or mamma does for me, and it’s all the same—to bespeak your tender care of Billy. All he wants is “a scrip with herbs and fruit supplied, and water from the spring;” that is to say, fresh bird-seed in his trough, a piece of chickweed—which, owing to the conflict of the elements, you must ask John to pick for you—and his glass washed out and filled from the spring which is underneath the pump somewhere. My throbbing temples warn me to desist—only it is my jaws—and mamma says she can’t conscientiously allow me to exert my intellect any more at present; so I must subscribe myself—though but the shadow of my former self—your faithful brother,

“‘FREDERICK THORNTON RAYMOND.’

“If this had but amused Bessie as much as it amused Fred and his mother, she would not have thought the day so long and dull; but she only grumbled a little at being asked to attend to Billy, and

said she wouldn't mind having mumps if she could have as much jelly as she wanted too. Now, this was very ungracious of her, for Billy was part of the 'Happy Family' which she and Fred were training, and which, in their presence, was wonderfully friendly,



considering of what it was composed. I cannot say what the consequences might have been if Ponto the great black dog, and Tripod the demure cat, and Stumps the rabbit, and Billy the canary-bird, and Columbus the dove, had all been left *alone* together for any length of time, but certainly when either of their tamers presided over

the ceremonies they let each other alone beautifully, and Bessie had spent a full hour the day before trying to coax Stumps and Tripod to eat out of the same plate. But then nobody had asked her to do it, and that makes a great difference, as we all know.

“After attending to Billy’s wants—for, as her old nurse sometimes said by way of excusing her, ‘her bark was worse than her bite’—she found that there were still two long hours left before it would be tea-time. Her mother came through the dining-room, where Bessie was sitting stupidly on the lounge watching the clock, and cheerfully suggested that Sophonisba looked as if she needed a drive. Bessie glanced at Sophonisba. That unfortunate lady was lying on the sofa-pillow with her hands spread out imploringly, and the too-quickly made bonnet tied over her head in a way that suggested Fred’s mumps. Bessie smiled a little in spite of herself as she slowly crept off the lounge and tucked Sophonisba into her basket-carriage. Then she began to pull the carriage in a drawling sort of way; and just at that unfortunate moment Tripod entered the room, and, springing upon the lounge, curled herself into a pretty ball, blinking and purring.

“‘Yes, you lazy little thing!’ said Bessie crossly, ‘that’s all you are good for, to eat milk and lie on a lounge. But you shall just pull Sophonisba clear to the front door and back again, or you sha’n’t have one bit of supper—so there!’

“Tripod blinked and purred more than ever, as if she thought Bessie was only talking in this way for fun; but she did not do

either when Bessie, holding her much too tightly for her comfort, fastened her with a long string to the carriage. It took some time and a great deal of trouble to do this, and if Tripod had not been very amiable she would have defended herself; but it was done at last, and Bessie set the carriage and pussy down on the floor and said, 'Get up!'

"Tripod did get up: she gave one bound into the air, and then scampered across the room, and in her worriment and fright ran the carriage against the sideboard, overturning it and breaking a wheel, and then, in her frantic struggles to free herself, catching her lame foot in the twine in a way which must have hurt her very much.

"'Oh, you wicked cat!' screamed Bessie, and, seizing poor Tripod roughly, she gave the twine a pull, and the cat a jerk all at once.

"This was too much: Tripod's patience came to an end, and Bessie screamed in earnest, for all down her longest finger was a deep red scratch. She stood there looking at it and screaming and sobbing by turns—not caring at all that Tripod, unable to free her poor paw, was struggling and mewing piteously—until the noise brought Mrs. Raymond, who ran hurriedly in, thinking Bessie must have set her clothes on fire or at least fallen down stairs. 'My child, what is the matter?' she asked anxiously.

"Bessie stopped screaming long enough to sob, 'That bad, wicked cat sc-scr-scratched me!'

“By this time Mrs. Raymond began to understand a little, and without saying another word to Bessie she hastened to release poor Tripod, but not before the cat, in her struggles, had torn a large hole in the very front breadth of Sophonisba's best frock. Then Bessie's mother said to her, very gravely, ‘Go to nurse, Bessie, and ask her to wrap up your finger, and then to undress you and put you to bed. I cannot leave Fred any longer just now; so you can ask nurse to bring you some bread and milk at tea-time, and before you are asleep I will come and see you.’

“Bessie went without replying, for the fit of temper was over now, and she was already ashamed and penitent. She did not enjoy her supper very much, you may be sure; she was thinking of poor Tripod's lame foot; of Fred's cheerful note, which she had not even answered by a message; of the fretfulness which had given her mother one more anxiety all day.

“Nurse left her as soon as her supper was eaten, and when she was quite alone the tears came again—not of anger, this time, but of sorrow and shame. She had just sobbed out, ‘I wish my finger hurt me a great, great deal more,’ when she felt her mother's cool hand on her hot forehead, and, springing from the bed, she threw herself into those kind arms, which, no matter how naughty she had been, were always open to her at the first sign of penitence.

“Her mother wrapped her in a shawl, and then taking her to

a low chair by the western window, talked over with her the unhappy day.

“‘I think it began this morning, mamma,’ said Bessie in a trembling voice. ‘I got to thinking of Sophonisba and my new carriage’ while I was saying my prayers, and I never noticed what I was saying till I came to “Amen;” and then, when something wanted me to begin over again, I just said, “I won’t!” to myself, and ran down stairs; and I didn’t want to feed Billy; and I never sent Fred a message even for his beautiful letter; and I bothered nurse and I bothered you; and I thought somebody ought to be punished, and so I punished Tripod, when all the time it was me myself.’ Bessie cried bitterly when she had said this, and she was not comforted until she had knelt beside her mother and begged forgiveness of the dear Lord, whose help she had rejected all day. Then her mother tucked her up in bed again, but Bessie said humbly, ‘Mamma, will you write me just a very little letter to Freddie, and may I hold Tripod while you write it?’

“Mrs. Raymond did not tell her she must wait until morning; she brought Tripod, who went with a loving purr into her little mistress’s arms, and then Bessie dictated and her mother wrote—

“‘MY DARLING FREDDIE:

“‘I have been very, very bad all day, but I am really and

truly sorry now. Your letter was beautiful, and I did what you asked for Billy, but I did it grudgingly; and so it was just as bad for me, but not for Billy, as if I hadn't done it at all. But I am very, very sorry, and I love you more than I can put in a letter; so good-night, my precious brother.'

"Mrs. Raymond promised to read this to Freddy immediately, and then, with one more loving kiss, she left her little daughter, saying that nurse might come for Tripod in a few minutes; and Bessie, comforted and forgiven, fell asleep, with the scratched hand nestled lovingly against Tripod's soft fur."

"I wish *my* pussy only had three legs," sighed Kitty as Mrs. Heath concluded her story; "that is, if she wouldn't mind. Tripod is such a lovely name!"

"She hasn't any tail worth speaking of," said Charlie gravely, "so I don't believe she'd object to being called Tripod. We might try."

Kitty had great faith in Charlie, so she brightened up immediately, and unrolled the gray shawl in which she supposed the little Manx was peacefully sleeping, but there was nothing but shawl! A hunt immediately ensued, in which both dogs, the other kitten—carried in Polly's arms—and all the children joined; and Manx was at last found, several fields away, and, as she probably thought, rescued from a dreadful fate. She stood courageously facing a large beetle, known to the children as a "pincher-

bug," and it would have been hard to tell which of these queer antagonists felt the more alarmed.

Kitty caught up her treasure, and Rob gave the pincher-bug a stick, which he seized with such fierceness that Kitty exclaimed, "If that had been Tripod's nose he'd have pinched it right off, for it isn't hard, like the stick.—When you meet a dreadful, horrible, wicked bug like that again, Tripod, don't you stand and look at him, but just turn round and run; it wouldn't matter so much if he caught your tail, for he couldn't pull *that* off."

Just then they heard a blast from the horn, which was the signal Martha had agreed to give when she should be ready for them to spread the cloth for supper.

When they got back to the pavilion they found that Mr. and Mrs. Denison had arrived, Martha was uncovering her crypt, and they had to scamper to have the table ready.

Although they had been coming to Clover Beach for the last four or five years, it had so happened that they had never succeeded in accomplishing a clambake before, there had always been so many other things to do. So Mr. Cheston told Martha, as she set the smoking dish on the table, that she ought to feel an honest pride in the fact that she was giving them all a new sensation. They agreed that it was a very pleasant one as the dish, on which barely enough "for manners" had been left, was carefully scraped by Kitty and Polly for the benefit of the kittens: there was no doubt about its being *their* first clambake. Kitty pitied Dandy and Dot very much



"SHE STOOD COURAGEOUSLY FACING A LARGE BEETLE."

See Page 149.

because there was no clambake left for them ; but they seemed perfectly satisfied with the plateful of bones and scraps which Lina had saved from dinner for them, and as they did not know about the clams, Lina told Kitty they did not really lose them.

The hay-wagon arrived soon after supper was over, and the family and its numerous possessions were once more stowed away in it. The ocean looked much too lovely to be left, but Mr. Cheston consoled them by the assurance that, being salt, it would keep for some time yet, and that they could come back next day.

"Yes, papa, but the clambake won't come back," said Kitty, so dolefully that they all laughed.

Mr. Denison must have thought that the longest way round was the shortest way home, for the wagon went winding about through green lanes until the gathering darkness—which was always later in coming here than it was anywhere else, the children thought—warned them home, although they all said they were not "half sung out" yet, and Kitty insisted that they were all "martingales" and could sing all night just as easily as not.

They would have been obliged to do it in their sleep, the mothers thought, for nobody kept awake more than two minutes after the heads were on the pillows ; there is nothing like a day out of doors to make the most nightingale-ish person sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LITTLE CLOUDY AGAIN.



H, let me alone, Sub!" said Nora crossly.

"I am *not* going to speak to Polly again until she apologizes, and—does something else; and you may just as well let me be, first as last."

"My dear Miss O'Neal," said Charlie, kicking up his heels ecstatically as he lay stretched on the sand before her, "after such an excellent pun as that

your hard heart should relent, for if it hadn't been for Polly, you never would have made it. Come now, breathe in my listening ear what poor little Hopkins has done, that 'you treat her so, treat her so;'" and Charlie warbled affectedly. "You know I am a perfect tomb of secrets; it shall be buried with me."

"No," said Nora; but she did not speak so stubbornly, Charlie thought, and she looked very much as if a smile were struggling with the pout. "I'd tell you if I would tell anybody—besides

mamma—but it will only make it worse to tell. And then you'd laugh—I know you would."

"I am afraid I should if it is anything funny," admitted Charlie candidly; "but you know I would not laugh ill-naturedly, dearie, and perhaps I can help you."

"I'll go away if you don't want me to hear, Nora," said Dick meekly; he had been standing



patiently beside his comrades, spade in hand, sympathizing as well as he could, without at all understanding.

"I wish they were all like Charlie and you, Dick," sighed Nora, "and then they wouldn't provoke me so. But you needn't wait

for me to come and play; I shall not play one single bit all day, and I've a great mind—" She stopped, but the mischief she had in her "great mind" danced in her eyes.

"I'm glad to hear it," said Charlie as Dick walked slowly away: "a great mind is magnanimous and overlooks small annoyances and offences."

"Don't be so clever, Sub—if you can help it," said Nora sarcastically.

"I really can't, you know," replied Charlie gravely; "it's the evidence of *my* great mind, you know. But come, dear," he added kindly, "tell me all about it: I know you will feel better if you do."

"Well," said Nora resignedly, "perhaps I will; that is, *if* you don't laugh much: I couldn't stand that. It was foolish of me to tell such a simple little thing as Polly, in the first place, but it happened that there was nobody handy but she and Rob, and it sounded so nice I went and told them. Now, you really and truly, and indeed and double, won't tell anybody but mamma?" and she looked searchingly into Charlie's eyes.

"Never, without your express permission, ma'am;" and Charlie returned her gaze unflinchingly.

"Very well, then. You know the day you went sailing we made hay, and the hay-field looked so pretty I wanted to write a poem about it, but I couldn't get it to rhyme—"

"I sympathize with you," interrupted Charlie. "If you will

excuse a little slang, I will remark that I have been there myself, and know the country."

"*Have* you?" said Nora, looking very much pleased. "I thought you could do anything you liked, Sub, if you only had time enough. I wrote—

'Over the hill the farmer's boy goes;'

and it seemed to me it was early in the morning, and the dew was all sparkling and the wild roses were making the air all sweet; but I couldn't get it to rhyme. I thought of 'nose' and 'rose' and 'toes,' but I couldn't make it make sense and rhyme too."

"Again I sympathize," murmured Charlie.

"And while I was trying," pursued Nora, "I fell asleep, and when I woke up Polly was tickling my nose with a wild rose—she and Rob had gathered a whole lot—and it came to me right away of its own accord—

'Over the hill the farmer's boy goes,

Tickling his nose with a newly-blown rose.'"

"That certainly makes both sound and sense," said Charlie, smiling, but he looked so kind that Nora did not take offence, and went on with her story: "I told it to Polly and Rob, to see what they would say, and they said it was beautiful, and they did not see how I did it—I didn't see myself, for it just came right into my head,

you know, all ready-made—and they made me say it over three or four times. Then I forgot all about it, thinking about the clambake, until this morning, and then— You know that little cottage, with the high board fence round it, that's been empty all summer?"



Charlie nodded.

"We often stop on our way to the beach to pick the woodbine that has straggled over on the outside of the fence, and this morning Polly stayed behind to pick some; and she stayed so long that Lina asked me to go back and see what was keeping her. She

was afraid she had fallen, for we had found a way to climb to the top of the fence : there are knot-holes, you know, and a wide board running all along the top. I found Polly all right, and I didn't wonder she had stayed. The cottage-windows were open—at least the inside shutters were—and there were curtains to the windows. Polly was sitting on top of the fence, and a funny-looking old gentleman, with a pipe half a yard long hanging from his mouth, was standing on the other side ; and—oh, Charlie!—two of the very dearest little dogs you ever *did* see, with the sweetest little pug noses, were sitting on the fence between Polly and the old gentleman ; and one of them was just shaking hands with her as if he had been a person. As I came up Polly said, ' That's my sister Nora, sir.—Nora, this nice old gentleman and these dear little dogs have come to stay all the rest of the summer, and he says we must come and see them often if our mamma will let us. She will, don't you think ? ' The old gentleman and I both laughed, and he made the little dogs shake hands with me, and then he said, in his funny broken English—I think he must be a German—that he saw I had my drawing-book, and that perhaps I could take a picture for him of Snip and Snap ? And before I could say a word Polly piped up, ' Yes, indeed she can ! She takes beautiful pictures of everything, and she made some poetry too in the hay-field ; I'll tell it to you :

" Over the hill the farmer's boy goes,

Tickling his newly-blown nose with a rose."

The old gentleman laughed till I thought the top of his head would come off, and I was so angry I ran right away: I couldn't speak a word; and so he thinks I really wrote that dreadful thing Polly said, and I don't know what to do."

"I think I would just ask Polly, the next time she sees the old gentleman—which will probably be some time to-day—to tell him how your verse really went. She'd do it, wouldn't she?" said Charlie.

"I don't know. I wasn't going even to *speak* to Polly till she said she was sorry."

"But does she know you are angry with her?"

"Why, no," said Nora, looking a little foolish, "I don't believe she does. She went back to the house, and I came on here."

"Very well, then, if you will trust me I will straighten things out for you immediately, and Polly can be spared all knowledge of your wrath. She's such a loving little soul, you know; and, after all, it appears that it was her pardonable pride in your double-ended genius which misled her; so I think you ought to give her a hug instead of a cold shoulder; and you must admit that her mistake was funny, Miss O'Neal?"

The clouds were all gone from Nora's face by this time; she could even laugh at the absurdity of the mistake, and she promised not to visit it in any way upon Polly.

Charlie started on his mission, but she called him back. "Do you know which is your blessing, Sub?" she said quite gravely.

"I have several," replied Charlie gayly. "You're one of them when you look as you do now, my darlin' sweet Nora!"

"No, I'm in earnest," said Nora; "it's 'Blessed are the peace-makers.'"

Polly could not be convinced that there was any difference, as to merit, between her version of Nora's poem and the original one, but she was perfectly willing to make the correction, and found her opportunity that very afternoon, when the old gentleman, pipe, "leetle dogs, and all," called at the farm-house to see if Mrs. Denison could serve him and his wife with milk and cream. At least, that was his ostensible errand, but when it was satisfactorily concluded he wandered home by way of the Cheston cottage, and, finding Mrs. Heath and Mrs. Cheston upon the piazza, affably entered into a conversation, in the course of which he told them that he and his wife had no children, and that if he could borrow a few now and then he would be much happier. He asked the ladies to call upon his wife; and, as they did not wish to deprive the children of an acquaintance which seemed to promise so much pleasure, they said they would call very soon; and the old gentleman went on his way apparently well pleased, having carefully held his long pipe behind him, and his hat in the hand which was not holding the pipe, during the interview. Polly, who had been perched in one of the hammocks which hung in the yard, joined him before he reached the gate and made her explanation.

The old gentleman must have had a very good memory for the

time when he was a small child himself, for he seemed to understand perfectly. "That makes one very great difference," he said gravely; "and always, when you will go to tell what one shall say, you will tell also if you are not sure that you remember exactly the words. That is honest. You will say to the little sister that if the mamma gives leave I hope to have soon a visit from her, and then she can draw the pictures of these my dogs." Then, as if he were afraid he had hurt Polly's feelings, he added kindly, "I go to make a garden at the new home, and when the flowers are blooming some shall be for you."

Polly never forgot his few grave words about repeating things *exactly*; and how many misunderstandings and troubles would be avoided if only everybody would remember them!

It had been arranged that, excepting in stormy weather, Mrs. Heath and Nelly were to share the meals with the Chestons at the farm-house, in order to give Mrs. Denison less trouble. Mrs. Heath found that she would be obliged to leave Clover Beach the last of July or first of August, and the children were trying to crowd every possible pleasure into Nelly's holiday. They were so well acquainted with the whole neighborhood that the favorite places which they wished to show her were almost beyond counting, and they were very much afraid she would be torn away from them before she had seen all the beauties which they wished to point out. This afternoon they had arranged to take her Lina's favorite walk, through a great oak wood which covered many acres of Mr. Deni-



"A LAMB LYING APPARENTLY DEAD."

See Page 166.

son's farm; and as soon as the early dinner was comfortably over they set off in high spirits, Nora, particularly, feeling light-hearted because of her conquest in the morning, and all of them indulging in joyful anticipations of the "fun" they would have when they became better acquainted with their new friend and his delightfully ugly dogs. Kitty was sure they could "pug Dot's nose up" by judicious applications of a spring clothes-pin, but upon the suggestion that it would "hurt like fun," she begged Dot's pardon and said she wouldn't do it for the world. But Lina said she didn't see any beauty in pug noses for dogs, any more than for people, and she was perfectly satisfied with Dandy and Dot precisely as they were.

The walk to the wood was not a long one, so even the little ones had been allowed to go; and when they all reached the shady hollow from which enough trees had been cut to permit a carpet of short grass to grow, they scattered about searching for ferns and flowers, and calling to each other to "Look here!" every five minutes. But a sudden cry of "Sister! oh, please come here quickly!" brought Lina, much frightened, to a black-berry-thicket, behind which Kitty and Polly and little Tom were crouching on the ground.

"Who is hurt?" she asked anxiously before she reached them.

"Oh, the *poor* little thing! the *dear* little thing!" came in eager chorus from all three; and then she saw, nearly concealed by Tom's blouse as he stooped over it, a poor little white lamb,

lying apparently dead upon the ground. Its eyes were closed and its legs hung limp and powerless. A shout as loud as all four could make it soon brought Nora and Nelly and the boys, and then they hastily gathered boughs and twisted them into a sort of litter, upon which the helpless little creature was tenderly laid.

Mrs. Cheston and Mrs. Heath received a far greater fright than Lina's, for they saw the procession approaching and a little white form on the litter long before they could distinguish what it was, and they knew it was at least an hour sooner than the children had expected to return. But the same thought struck both mothers at once.

"They're all there, for I've counted, and it must be some child they've found," cried Mrs. Heath, who, having only one child, was much more easily excited and alarmed about her than Mrs. Cheston was about her whole eight.

"Yes, I counted too," said the latter, smiling, "but I don't think it is a child: it is some sort of little animal."

A chorus of information assailed the mothers as soon as the procession came within speaking distance, and the lamb was tenderly deposited on an old rug, while most of the children ran to beg Mrs. Denison's advice and assistance, and some warm milk in case the patient should recover its senses enough to be fed.

Mrs. Denison said that her husband had missed a lamb when

he counted the flock the night before, and had looked about in the wood, but had been unable to find it; the thicket in which it was entangled had no doubt hidden it.

"Then if we cure it we'll have to give it back to Mr. Denison," said Kitty dolefully.

Mrs. Denison laughed at Kitty's mournful face. "No, my dear," she said; "if you can cure it you may have it for your own, if you can make the rest of the menagerie agree with it."

"Dandy wouldn't hurt it," said Kitty hopefully—"he'd help us take care of it; and Dot's too little; and Tripod— Do kittens ever hurt lambs, Mrs. Denison?"

"Not that I ever heard of," said Mrs. Denison; "and I think I would have found it out, for we've raised a good many of both since I came to the farm."

The watchers by the little lamb announced joyfully that it had opened its eyes and tried to *baa* while the rest were gone; and Mrs. Denison assured them that it was only worn out with fatigue and hunger, and that a few days' rest and care would quite restore it. If the little lamb had come near dying of neglect, he came very near making up for it by dying from a surfeit. Everybody wished to feed him; the baby had to be carefully watched or he would have smothered the lamb in his tender embraces; and in two or three days this last addition to the menagerie became so popular that Dot openly manifested his

jealousy. Lina said Dandy was too magnanimous to be jealous of a lamb, and Kitty said, "Mag—*what*, Lina? I wish you wouldn't talk that way!"

There was some discussion as to whether everybody ought to go away and leave the lamb the very day after he was found, and when, as Kitty said, he wasn't quite well enough to sit up yet; but Mrs. Denison assured them that she would take every care of the invalid while they were gone, and that they might go with easy minds.

That evening Nora lingered with her mother after the rest had said good-night and gone to bed, and when they were alone she told of her anger at Polly and Charlie's intercession. "When I came to think, mamma," she said, "I was frightened at being so mean: dear little Polly only meant to praise me and be proud of me, and then I wouldn't so much as speak to her! And then I thought of all the fun I had made of Lina, when I can't bear anybody to smile ever so little at me if they're making fun of me, and she never kept angry; she always forgave me before I had asked her. And when we found the lamb, and it did not know anything, not even that it was lost, it made me think of the way Charlie came to me in the morning and showed me how bad I was, without telling me so, and made me come back."

"And did it not make you think of something else?" said Mrs. Cheston as Nora paused.

"Yes, mamma," she answered softly, "it made me think of the verse about coming 'to seek and to save that which was lost.'"

Mrs. Cheston kissed her little daughter. "It is because Charlie is trying so hard to follow that dear Saviour," she said, "that he is growing like Him. We cannot be entirely like that perfect Pattern while we are here, but if we try our best we are told that we shall be afterward, and that *then* we 'shall be satisfied.' And He sees, darling, that you have more to contend with in yourself than some of us have; so you must not be discouraged, but take the verse which so often comforts me: 'He giveth more grace.'"

"But you don't have to contend, mamma," said Nora; "you never get angry and say things as we do."

"It is high bed-time now," said Mrs. Cheston, "for people who are going on picnics to-morrow, but the next time that a story is wanted I have one all ready to tell. I will not say another word now besides 'Good-night;'" and, kissing Nora once more, her mother left her.



CHAPTER IX.

THE PICNIC.



THE cloudless weather continued not only through the festival week, but for many days after, and the farmers did not rejoice quite so much over it as the children did, for it was an exceptionally dry summer, and some of the crops suffered a little. But Mr. Denison said that of all crops he thought children were the most satisfactory; they flourished equally in all weathers. And the

crop at Clover Beach that summer was no exception to this delightful rule. It was a very lively crop that Friday morning. It had been decided to hold the picnic on the island, and they were to be taken up there in three row-boats, the smallest and lightest of which was assigned to Charlie, who rowed very well, but was not quite so strong as he was willing. The other two boats were to be manned by Mr. Cheston and Mr. Denison, for the farmer's family had yielded to general persuasion so far as Mr. Denison and Martha

were concerned. Mrs. Denison said it would do her no good to go to a picnic on churning-day, for her mind would be left behind in the churn, but she should not be at all lonely, for there was the lamb. Everybody felt sorry that some other day had not been chosen, but she said it would never do for her to lock up the farm and go off with the key in her pocket: her ship might come in, and if nobody was there to meet it, it would go out again. Besides, she should enjoy the rest—no dinner to get, and no noise to prevent her taking naps all day if she wanted to. The children laughed at this, for only the day before she had been telling them affectionately that when they went away in the fall she hardly got done missing them before they came again.

Mrs. Cheston and Mrs. Heath and Nora graciously consented to go in a *row*-boat, which, they said, was an entirely different thing from going in a sail-boat; to which the people who liked sailing somewhat mournfully assented. Great, therefore, was the joy of these latter when, just as they were starting, a sail-boat which they had watched coming up the inlet made for their pier, and they saw that she was manned by a young fisherman who had often taken them out during former summers. He regretted that his boat was not large enough to take the whole party, but offered to take two or three and tow all the rest, assuring them that he was going on up the river, anyhow. So Lina and Kitty and Dick and Rob were helped into his boat, and the three small boats fastened astern, but Mrs. Cheston said she felt like the man who was put into the pa-

lanquin which had no bottom, and who, after a lively trot to keep pace with the bearers, said if it wasn't for the name of the thing he'd about as lief have walked; she would almost as soon go in a



sail-boat as be towed by one. Mrs. Heath said that was just the way *she* felt, only she had been too bashful to say so; and Nora said she thought it was worse. So, with an indulgent smile for their weakness, Mr. Cheston said it wasn't far to row, and if they would get into Charlie's light boat he would row them, and the

others could be towed if little Tom came with them, and Charlie would play father and see that nobody fell overboard. This was done, notwithstanding the shouts of "Oh, mamma, it's not the same *at all*;" "You wouldn't tip up, you know, ma'am;" "You'll not get there half as soon."

Mrs. Cheston and Mrs. Heath smiled serenely, and said they were in no hurry whatever. The sail-boat and its hangers-on made quick time to the island, and by the time the row-boat arrived the other boats had been unpacked and the contents stowed in a delightful cave which had been discovered the last time they were there. The shawls for the pavilion had been brought, and ropes for two or three swings, and the whole family entered with such zeal into playing that they were the "Swiss Family Robinson"—accounting for the extra mother by pretending that the original mother had a "double"—that they were surprised by the sound of a dinner-horn, which, blown somewhere on the delightfully-distant mainland, set Lina to quoting Tennyson's "Bugle-Song," of which they were all very fond, although Charlie told her the poet would never forgive her if he should hear of his "Bugle-Song" quoted *apropos* of a dinner-horn.

Everybody flew at the baskets except those who gathered sticks and made the fire. They had begged so hard to do their own cooking that good-natured Mrs. Denison had provided a raw beef-steak for the exercise of their talents in that line, wisely putting in also plenty of cooked meat. Now, although Lina had for the past

year or two often made cake under her mother's direction, and latterly without it, she had never undertaken to broil a steak before, and she grew flushed and irritable, as the grease *would* blaze up, and the meat *would* turn black before it was brown, and the gravy *would* run into the coals instead of waiting to be poured from the gridiron into the dish. The eager efforts of the other children to "help" only increased her irritation; she scolded Kitty sharply for zealously sprinkling some salt on the steak while it was still on the fire; she let the coffee boil over while she was turning the steak; and when it was done at last, and she went to remove it from the gridiron to the dish—which latter Dick was politely holding for her—her hands shook so that somehow the gridiron slipped and down went the steak into a bed of ashes! There was a general howl from the children: "Oh, Lina! how *could* you? When we'd cooked it ourselves and all!"

"It was just as much Dick's fault as mine," said Lina crossly, and nearly crying, "and if you hadn't all bothered me to death it wouldn't have happened." And she marched indignantly off, leaving the unlucky steak to its fate.

Nora and Kitty fished it out of the ashes, and washed it off with some boiling water from the kettle, but in spite of their good offices it was a melancholy-looking piece of meat, of which all felt much ashamed.

"I never shall wonder again," said Kitty, "when the cook at home gets cross and shoos us all out of the kitchen. I think it

must be the fire that does it: you know the boys say 'as mad as fire' when they mean very mad indeed."

Nora said nothing. Not many weeks ago she would have chuckled over Lina's annoyance and anger, but they gave her no pleasure to-day. She did her best to "restore" the steak, resolving not to let the grown-up people be called to dinner until she had coaxed Lina back again and peace as well as the steak was restored.

Meanwhile, Dick had followed Lina into the wood, and, catching up with her, tried to take her hand. "Dear Lina," he said, "I know I'm clumsy, but I'm *very* sorry I made you drop the steak. The girls are washing it off, and I don't believe it's spoiled; so come back, there's a dear, and let's call them to dinner."

"I don't wish any dinner," said Lina stiffly; "you need not wait for me. Go and call them if you like."

"But, Lina," said Dick, half crying, "you're spoiling all the fun, and this was to be the best day of all. Do come back."

"It is not my fault that the fun is spoiled," was Lina's cold reply. "If you had not all bothered me so it would not have happened at all." And, turning resolutely from Dick, she walked away.

Dick threw himself down on the grass, too miserable to go back. He had no intention whatever of falling asleep, but he suddenly started up bewildered: Charlie was turning him over and calling his name.

"Come, old fellow," said Charlie, "there's a lady waiting to see you, and after that your dinner."

Lina came up and put her arms around Dick's neck. Her eyes were red, but her face was gentle and sweet again. "Will



you forgive me, Dick?" she whispered. "You didn't make me drop the steak. I was unfair, and nearly told a real story."

Dick was very much overcome by Lina's apology. "Dear

lady," he said—they all called her "lady" and "my lady" when they were in a good-humor with her—"we did bother you awfully and I don't wonder you got cross. I think we were all hungry for our dinners, anyhow."

Lina and Charlie couldn't help laughing at this satisfactory accounting for the little breeze, but Lina's heart was touched when she joined the rest by the fact that not the slightest allusion was made to it by them. Nora was feeling the pleasure of using for good the power which she had so often used for ill.

Everything was ready, and there was great triumph among the small fry because the "big people" had, by special request, left the whole arrangement of the dinner to this band of amateur cooks and waiters.

Every cake was wreathed in green leaves, a small bouquet of wild flowers lay at each plate, the cloth was spread on the grass just within the shade of the great trees, and all the arrangements met with the praise which they deserved.

It had gone sorely "against the grain" with Martha to sit still and allow the children to do all the work, for Kitty and Rob had laughingly tied her to a tree with a daisy-chain, telling her that she was out for a holiday and should not so much as unpack a hamper. But when dinner was over she could stand it no longer, and, tying on a large check apron with which she had thoughtfully provided herself over her clean print dress, she made short work of the dishes, for which the cooks had

prudently hung on a kettle of water before they sat down to dinner. She kept three diligent "wipers" flying, and in half an hour after they left the table the last plate was wiped and the ceremonies were over for that meal. They had dined so late that they decided to have a "handed tea," the elegance of the idea pleasing Kitty and Rob particularly.

The day had grown very warm, and there was a general sitting down under the trees after dinner, and then came the usual request for a story.

Nora looked significantly at her mother.

"Yes," said Mrs. Cheston, smiling, "I have not forgotten telling you last night that I had a story ready, so if nobody else has one in his or her head just at this minute, I will tell mine, or at least begin it, and if it is too long for one sitting, half of it will keep quite well until another time."

Everybody was in haste to mention that their heads did not contain an idea of a story, except little Tom, who said, with a very serious expression on his chubby face, "There is a story in *my* head, a very pretty story, and it is about a bear."

"Very well," said Mrs. Cheston; "I don't believe your story is as long as mine, so you may tell yours first, and I will tell mine afterward."

"Once there was a bear," said Tom, looking thoughtfully on the ground. "It was a very little bear, littler than I am, and it would not mind its bear-mother. So it got caught in a trap, and the



"I MADE IT STOP SUCKING ITS THUMB."

See Page 181.

man tied a string round its neck and tied the other end of the string to the pump, and the little bear had to pump whenever anybody wanted a drink ; and then it was very sorry it had not minded its mother. So it told me if I would untie the string it would come and be my little bear ; and I did, and it came. I let it sleep in my bed, and we played all day in the garden ; and I taught it to sing, and I made it stop sucking its thumb, and gave it cakes and apples and oranges and candy every day, and a great deal more on its birthday ; and it never had to pump at all ; and then it was very *glad* it had not minded its mother. That's all."

And Tom looked serenely around amid the burst of applause with which the other children greeted the end of his story.

"I wish Nora to make a picture of me and my bear," said Tom when the applause subsided. "I will take Dick for my bear : we used to sit this way ;" and he put his arm round Dick's neck and posed for the picture.

Amid great laughter Nora drew the picture, as well as she could with so inadequate a model, on the strip of smooth sand bordering the river, while Rob and Kitty and Polly eagerly questioned the romancer as to where he found the bear, where he kept it, and where it was now.

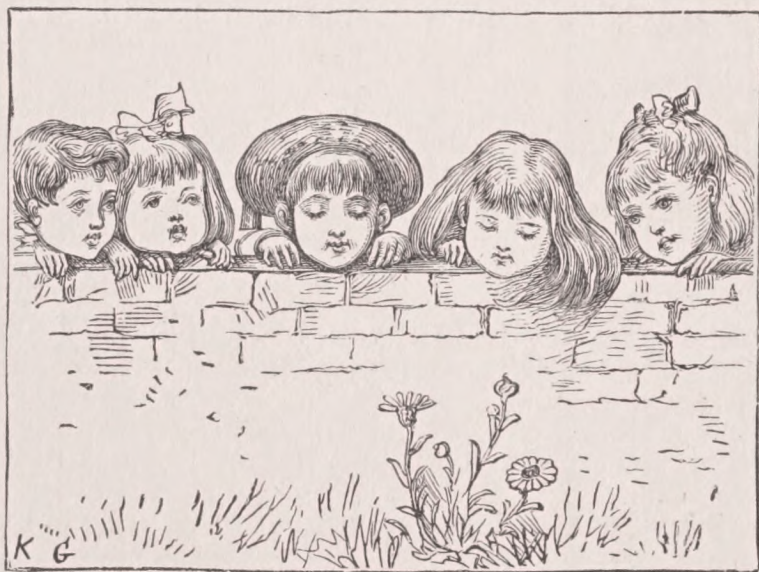
"It is where I go when I dream things," he answered. "I'm another little boy when I get there, and I have a great many things I don't have here. I know how to fly when I'm there, and to swim too."

They all laughed at this, remembering how Tom had stood nearly a whole morning on the stairs, not more than a week ago, raising and lowering his little arms and saying over and over, with a puzzled face, "I *did* fly last night! I *did*! I flied from the ground to the roof, and from the roof to the ground."

The picture being finished to Tom's satisfaction, mamma was told that it was her turn, and that the story must have a name, first of all.

"Very well," she said, "after the sumptuous manner in which I have been waited upon to-day I can refuse no reasonable demands. I will call my story 'The Dove's Mission.'"

"That's a lovely name," said Kitty. "Begin, please, mamma."



CHAPTER X.

THE BEGINNING OF A STORY AND END OF THE PICNIC.



“**B**ERTIE was the oldest, but she was only six years old when her dear mamma died, and could but just remember her. Pen, who came next, thought she could remember from hearing Bertie talk, but May and little Alice did not even think they could, and used to beg Bertie and Pen to tell them ‘every single thing they could think of.’

“It was not much. Mrs. Forrester had been an invalid for a year before her death, and to Bertie the memory was like a vision of an angel—a pale, sweet, loving face, a slender white-robed figure, a gentle voice, which she had never heard utter an unkind or fretful word. These were Bertie’s recollections—these and a sad day, of which she never liked to speak, when the soft, caressing hand lay for the last time upon her head and the gentle

voice said faintly, 'Love God and papa and little sisters, darling, and live so that you and they may all come safely to the Father's house.'

"After a while her papa had explained to her what she did not understand of these last words—how she was the oldest, and how Pen and May, and after a while little Alice, would, almost without knowing it, follow her example and be influenced by her life.

"The home had not been broken up; a sister of Mr. Forrester's, whom the children loved dearly, had come to live with them, and had watched over her little nieces with almost a mother's care. But when Bertie was about twelve years old this beloved aunt, after nearly wearing out the patience of somebody who had been waiting for her, had gone to a home of her own. Mr. Forrester had talked a little about a housekeeper and governess, but the servants were honest and faithful, and the children had begged so earnestly to be allowed to go on attending school and to 'keep themselves' that he had allowed them to try the experiment.

"So long as the novelty lasted it seemed to work very well. Bertie felt extremely dignified sitting at the waiter morning and evening pouring out for her papa. She carefully sorted the clean clothes every week, laying aside those which needed mending and patiently taking mending-lessons from the old seamstress who came once a week to 'mend them all up,' as Alice said.

She saw to the hands and faces and books and aprons every morning before school, and kept her own clothes and hair and nails so neat that she had no difficulty in inducing the little sisters to follow her example. Indeed, they looked upon Bertie as a sort of oracle, telling her their little plans and troubles in a way which touched and pleased her more than she knew herself.

“But there is a cruel old proverb which says that ‘New brooms sweep clean,’ and two or three months after Aunt Mary left them this particular little broom began to show signs of wearing out. Bertie had taken a special pride in always looking over the table the last thing before they sat down to a meal, but a new sort of fancy-work which suddenly came into fashion at school engrossed her so that she could hardly persuade herself to lay it down while she was at the table, much less five minutes before meal-times, and the dinners and breakfasts and suppers began to be what papa called ‘promenade concerts.’ The waitress, who was also the chambermaid, was valued for her character rather than for her accomplishments, and seemed to think that one salt-cellar in the middle of the table was quite enough for five people, and that salt-spoons and butter-knives and butter-plates were unnecessary luxuries.

“Papa was forbearing; he hoped that this frenzy about fancy-work might be only a passing thing, and he waited. He was obliged to be at his office all day, and he could not see how

Bertie was gradually letting go one duty after another, although he noticed the slipshod look which was stealing over the parlor, and noticed it with pain, for the parlor had been almost as much Bertie's pride as the table. The flowers had been freshly gathered or rearranged for it every day; no dust or litter had disfigured it when he came home tired at five o'clock; papers and pamphlets were gathered up into orderly piles or put away in the bookcase; and the wood-fire on andirons which everybody enjoyed so had always welcomed him with a merry blaze when there was the least excuse of chilliness in the air.

"Now the ashes and half-burnt wood were left untouched, sometimes for two or three days together; dust gathered on the piano and mantelpiece, perhaps to be hastily half wiped off just before he came in, and perhaps not. The children's clothes no longer looked fresh and whole, and the getting off to school every morning was a wild scramble for books and aprons and hats.

"Mr. Forrester spoke gently to Bertie more than once, and she cried and begged him to forgive her, and perhaps did a little better for a few days, and then 'backslid' again.

"While things were in this most uncomfortable state Mr. Forrester received a letter from his sister, saying that she would stop and spend a night at W—— on her way home from a visit she had been paying among her husband's relatives. He said nothing about this to the children, for he wished his sister to see things

in their now usual condition, and he knew that Bertie, without intending any deceit, would put a very different face from its ordinary one on the neglected house to welcome the dear aunt.

“So there was quite as much consternation as joy in Bertie’s heart when one evening, just as they were sitting down to the uninviting-looking supper-table, the omnibus from the train drew up at their door and Aunt Mary stepped out. The warm welcome which she received from everybody made her feel only deeper regret for the signs of disorder and neglect which were too numerous and too glaring to be overlooked. The supper was good and plentiful—the trustworthy old cook saw to that—but the tablecloth was soiled, the table only half set, and the children who surrounded it matched it a great deal too well.

“Aunt Mary had not the heart to lecture anybody that evening when they all seemed so sincerely glad to see her, but Bertie noticed the pained look on her face when they went from the uncomfortable tea-table to the frowsy-looking parlor. One corner was littered with dolls and dolls’ dishes where Alice and May had been playing ‘house’ the evening before, for their house had remained unmolested through the day. A fire had been hastily kindled, but the hearth was unswept, and when Aunt Mary lifted the lamp while the table was being moved she found her fingers perfumed with kerosene.

“‘You should wipe the lamps carefully, dear,’ she said to

Bertie; 'it is dangerous to leave them like this: in lighting the wick you might light the whole lamp.'

'I—I didn't trim them to-day, aunty,' said Bertie coloring. 'I suppose Ann did it, and she's always in such a hurry.'

"Aunt Mary said nothing, and Bertie, after fidgeting around the table for a few minutes, suddenly burst out with, 'I said I didn't trim them to-day, aunty, as if I had done it yesterday and all the days before that; and I might just as well have told a real story, for I haven't done it for—oh, for weeks!'

"Aunt Mary looked pleased. 'That's my honest girl!' she said. 'I have a great contempt for lies in general, but it is greatest for the lies which people contrive to tell without telling them. Now let me hear all about everything, and don't be afraid of frightening me. You are not quite thirteen, and I didn't expect you to work a miracle when you undertook to be house-mother: I told your father it was too much to expect of such a child.'

"Bertie was in two minds about this speech. She felt a great sense of relief that her aunt had anticipated her failure, and so could not reasonably be displeased with her for failing; but mortified vanity forced the tears from her eyes, and there was some resentment in her voice as she said, 'If you felt so sure I would fail, Aunt Mary, I don't see why you and papa let me try.'

"Aunt Mary took the poor little failure into her kind arms. They were alone by this time, for Mr. Forrester had gone to the library;

Pen after begging so hard to sit up till aunty went to bed that her father had consented for once, had ingloriously fallen asleep in the corner of the sofa; and Alice and May had been in bed for some time. So they had an old-fashioned talk. Bertie concealed nothing, and when her narrative was ended said meekly, 'What do you think papa ought to do with me, aunty?'

"'My child,' said Aunt Mary kindly, 'your father and I both think you are too young for what you have undertaken. I thought so from the first, and although I can see—and think you can too—that you have allowed yourself to be defeated too easily, and have not relied enough upon that Strength which we may all have even for the commonest things, still, I do not think an unnecessary burden ought to be laid on your poor little shoulders; and we are going to make a fresh arrangement. It is nearly settled; your father and I have been corresponding about it for some time, and this is it. You remember your cousin Hannah Briggs, don't you?'

"'Yes,' said Bertie, wonderingly: 'she was here while dear mamma was ill, you know, and she came for a little visit last year; and we children couldn't help being glad, though we knew it was wrong, when her daughter was taken ill, away out West somewhere, and she had to go sooner than she meant to.'

"'But why were you glad to have her go?' asked Aunt Mary with some surprise.

"'Oh, I don't exactly know,' said Bertie reluctantly. 'She wore a wig, aunty—a sorrel wig—and she walked with a sort of a hitch,

and she said it was "rheumatiz," and she called papa "Charles Henry," and us "the young people," as if there were about a thousand of us.'

"Aunt Mary laughed heartily. 'Is that all?' she asked; and Bertie fancied she looked relieved. 'My dear child,' Aunt Mary continued, growing serious again, 'your cousin Hannah is one of the best women in the world, and all these little foolish things are not worth mentioning. Have you forgotten the devoted kindness with which she helped to nurse your dear mamma? Nothing seemed to tire or annoy her while she could be useful. I have written to her, and she has consented to come and take charge of the house—'

"Aunt Mary was interrupted by a cry of distress from Bertie: 'Oh, aunty, there will be no more comfort! She will be at the table when we want papa all to ourselves, and in the way everywhere.'

"'Now you are talking foolishly,' said Aunt Mary very gravely, 'and I will not try to argue with you while you are in this mood. I will merely tell you the rest of the plan, and then we will go to bed, and I hope you will be more reasonable in the morning. Miss Wyatt is going to give up the school to which you have always gone, and no one else has offered to take it. Your father does not wish you to go to the public school; so Cousin Hannah's daughter, Ruth, is coming with her to be your governess. She is a very sweet young girl, and is only about twenty years old, but she has had a good education and loves children; and we feel sure that it

rests entirely with yourselves to be happy and contented in the new state of affairs.'

"'It doesn't rest with ourselves,' said Bertie passionately. 'You have no right to do this, Aunt Mary. I shall ask papa;'" and a burst of tears cut the sentence short.

"'My child,' said Aunt Mary sorrowfully, 'you are making a hard path for yourself to walk in.' She said no more, but kissed the sobbing child good-night, waked Pen and went to bed herself.

"She was obliged to go home the next morning, and the tears rose to her eyes when Bertie and Pen sullenly and reluctantly kissed her good-bye. It was plain that Bertie had prejudiced Pen against the new arrangement, and Aunt Mary bestowed a heartfelt sigh upon the prospects of Cousin Hannah and Ruth.

"It was a prophetic sigh. I have not time to tell you of all that happened between, but must 'skip' you to a day two or three weeks after the house had been put into Cousin Hannah's capable hands and the children into Ruth's. Alice and May were happy little things, and had accepted the new government very tranquilly. They saw no objections to Cousin Hannah. To be sure, she kindly but firmly insisted upon having play-things restored to the play-room, hats and coats to hooks, shoes to shoe-bags, and books to shelves, but she kept up an unfailing supply of gingerbread: nobody was obliged to wait while spoons and napkins and salt-cellars were hastily put on the table; the

house had an air of orderly comfort; and then, as Alice said, 'she had such a great big lap!' Ruth, too, found favor with these little people—she was so gentle, so merry, she entered so heartily into all their plays and plans; and if she was somewhat strict in school-hours it was a strictness that had no harshness in it.

"The household would have moved happily along on its new wheels but for Bertie. She maintained, day after day, her sullen and injured air. When Pen, who was a good-tempered child, showed signs of yielding to Cousin Hannah's hearty kindness and Ruth's gentle influence, Bertie talked her back again, and, unconsciously perhaps, exaggerated every change, every little annoyance, into an injury or an insult.

"Sins are sociable things, and Bertie's standard of right and wrong dragged sadly in the dust about this time. She could not refuse to study and walk and go through the form of playing with the other children, for her father, when he found that reasoning did no good, had become very stern, and she was afraid to disobey him. But her sullen face and reluctant manner marred many a pleasant hour for Ruth and the little sisters, and nothing but the patience which comes of earnest prayer could have made Ruth able to persevere. This patience was not lost upon Bertie: try as she would, she could not shut her eyes to the beauty of Ruth's character and the unfailing gentleness which marked her words and looks; and the hard ground was being broken for the seeds of repentance and reparation.

“God has many ways in which to help His faithful servants, and help came to Ruth from one of the ‘birds of the air’ about which our Saviour seemed to love to speak. In one of the long country rambles on which Ruth often took the children they met with an adventure. They were just turning from a shady wood-path into the open road when they heard angry voices in the edge of the wood, and presently two boys, about twelve or thirteen years old, appeared, carrying between them a cage slung on a stick. Crouching on the floor of the cage was a beautiful wood-pigeon; one wing drooped as if broken, and its beautiful frightened eyes seemed turned imploringly toward the children.

“They gathered eagerly about the cage, asking a dozen questions, but the boys had suddenly stopped quarrelling and stood silent, looking a good deal ashamed. A few gentle questions from Ruth brought out their story: they had set a snare and caught and sold several birds, but in taking this one from the snare the younger boy had broken its wing. The older one had wished to kill it rather than be troubled with the care of it, and it was about this that they had quarrelled, for the younger one, more pitiful than the other, had insisted on taking the bird home and trying to save its little life.

“Alice sprang forward and caught the larger boy by the hand. ‘Oh, please,’ she exclaimed, ‘I have two dollars in my bank at home, and you shall have one and he shall have one if you’ll give me the dear little bird to nurse and make well—will you?’

“‘I’m not quite so mean as all that,’ said the big boy, somewhat

sulkily ; ‘you’re welcome to the bird : it’s worth nothing to me, and *he* will be glad enough to be rid of the trouble of it, for all he was so fierce about it.’

“ ‘Well, suppose I will,’ said the other boy ; ‘I wasn’t going to keep it just for fun, but I wasn’t mean enough to kill it after I’d hurt it.’

“Ruth saw an opening here for a few gentle words about the cruelty of the business, and, although the boys would not promise to give it up, they listened respectfully, and said they would think about it. They willingly agreed to lend Alice the cage to carry the dove home, saying they could call for it the next day, but refused to sell it, although Alice once more offered both her dollars.

“The little girl could not help feeling very happy in her new possession, and could hardly be induced to let Ruth help her carry it. She pitied the poor little frightened bird, which had fluttered up to the perch in the cage, but she felt quite sure that papa could cure it, for had he not mended the kitten’s broken leg and cured old Watch’s lame foot? So she chattered happily all the way home, while May sympathized and planned with her ; and it was all Bertie could do to keep Pen—and herself too, for that matter—from turning round and joining in the eager talk. They managed to walk dignifiedly on in front, with only an occasional backward glance when they thought nobody was looking.

“But Pen was tired of being dignified, and that night, after she and Bertie had gone to bed, she ‘freed her mind.’ ‘See here, Bert

Forrester!' she said, sitting straight up by way of emphasis, and thereby pulling the clothes off Bertie in a very disagreeable way, 'you can keep on behaving like a poker to Cousin Hannah and



Cousin Ruth if you see any sense in it, but I don't, and I don't mean to do it any longer. We're just as comfortable as comfortable; and you must have been too little to keep house, I think; and I don't see why you made such a fuss: it's papa's house, anyhow. And I mean to say I'm sorry all around to-morrow, and be pleasant—at least as pleasant as I was before. So good-night;' and Pen popped down as suddenly as she had popped up, and was asleep in five minutes.

"And Bertie? She lay wide awake for an hour in the sweet summer darkness, fighting her conscience. Once more she seemed to hear the faint, loving voice saying, 'Love God and papa and little sisters, darling, and live so that you and they may all come safely to the Father's house.'

"Was this living so? But she had been set aside; her kingdom had been taken from her; her sisters were learning to love Cousin Hannah and Ruth better than they loved her.

"'Oh, mamma! mamma!' she sobbed, '*you* would have given me another chance.' And she cried herself to sleep."

"I regret very much to interrupt the court," said Mr. Cheston, "but if we are to return to civilization to-night, and have tea here before we begin to return, the rest of the narrative must needs be postponed."

"Oh, papa! just as we were coming to the dove!" cried Kitty, and the rest of the children remonstrated with equal eloquence.

"The dove will not fly away until we have time to finish its history," said Mrs. Cheston, smiling; "and papa is quite right, as he generally is"—papa bowed profoundly—"for it is after five o'clock now, and there is no obliging sail-boat at hand to tow us home."

So there was a merry bustle over the "handed tea," about which Martha insisted upon helping, and papa declared that a great deal too much bread and butter was eaten for so fashionable an entertainment.

They were about finishing the packing of baskets and bundles into the boats when Charlie cried, "A sail! a sail!" and there was their friend of the morning just coming in sight from somewhere up the river. He signalled energetically to them with his red pocket-handkerchief, and they waited patiently, sure that they were to be towed home, and employing the time by persuading the timid ones to allow themselves to be towed "just this once."

The river was like glass, there was barely enough wind to move the boat, and Mr. Cheston promised solemnly to cast off the uniting line the moment they should feel alarmed; so they graciously consented, and were candid enough to admit that their fears had been groundless.

Their friend of the sail-boat expressed great pleasure at having "caught" them. He had been working at a farm some distance up the river, and had hurried away without his supper, as they discovered upon cross-examining him on the subject, in order that he might tow them home. So the baskets, which fortunately, owing to Mrs. Denison's bountiful providing, were not quite empty, were rifled for his benefit, and Mr. Cheston and Charlie managed the boat while its master made a hearty supper of sandwiches and cake. To the children's great delight, he "joined in" when they began to sing—with a voice of rather more power than sweetness, but the power was just what they wanted: they were very desirous that every one living along both banks should hear them.

They found Mrs. Denison sound asleep on the piazza of the

farm-house, and Charlie, motioning the rest to be silent, stepped softly up and kissed her rosy cheek. She woke, exclaiming, "Gracious!" in a tone of such utter horror that the children laughed with delight, and Kitty exclaimed, "It's your ship, Aunt Denison; it's just come in, and we are the passengers, and you owe the captain a pair of gloves."

"*Did* your ship come in?" said Polly; "because if it didn't you might just as well have gone; and if it did we want to see what it brought you—right away."

"Yes, it did," answered Mrs. Denison, nodding her head mysteriously, "but you can't see the passengers until to-morrow; they've gone to bed—you know folks are always very tired after a voyage—and they can't be disturbed to-night on any account."

"Did it bring anything besides passengers?" "How many passengers were there?" "Are they little girls and boys?" "Do they speak English?" were some of the questions which were showered upon Mrs. Denison before she could answer any of them.

"You shall see the passengers to-morrow," was all she would say, "and you shall have some of the freight for your breakfast."

No amount of questioning would make her tell anything more, and she said she thought they were rather shabby. Here she had been sitting up, waiting for an account of the picnic,

and not one word had she heard—not even if her cake was good! She got plenty of accounts after that, and praise enough of her various good things to make her vain for ever after, she said; and then the mothers carried off their treasures, saying there would be no getting anybody up the next morning.

Lina told her mother, before she slept, how she had given way to her temper on the island, and how, but for the forbearance and kindness of the others, the day would have been spoiled. “I feel all discouraged, mamma,” she said sadly; “it seems to me I get worse all the time. Just think of my losing control of myself, and speaking that way to dear little Dick, because I couldn’t make the steak cook right! It was so childish!”

“Dear daughter,” said her mother, “you must not be discouraged. So long as you see your fault, and do not attempt to justify yourself, I shall feel hopeful, and you may be very sure that I am praying for you every day. The only way is to *try harder*. When you feel your temper rising, if you can go away by yourself, and if you cannot do that keep resolutely silent: we often regret having spoken, but we very rarely have reason to regret having been silent. And it ought to comfort you to think that Nora’s forbearance to-day was probably the result of your forgiveness and forbearance when she hurt your feelings so with that picture: she does not say

much, but I don't think she ever forgets anything of that kind."

"You are the best mother in the world!" said Lina, hugging and kissing Mrs. Cheston for good-night, "and I don't mean to be discouraged while *you* don't give me up."



CHAPTER XI.

THE "PASSENGERS," AND THE END OF THE STORY.



OMEHOW, though, nobody had to be called more than once the next morning, or told to hurry with dressing, and the breakfast bell's summons was obeyed with exemplary promptness. There was a general groan of disappointment when the breakfast was found to consist of some balloon-like clam-fritters and some tempting-looking broiled fish.

"I hope nobody here may ever be sufficiently starved to remember groaning over a breakfast like this," said Mrs. Cheston as she took her seat at the waiter.

"But, mamma, Aunty Denison said we should have the freight of her ship for breakfast," said Kitty mournfully, "and I thought it would be oranges and lemons and bananas and pineapples, and maybe some wonderful things I had never seen at all."

The rest laughed at Kitty's sorrowful face, but even Lina and

Charlie admitted that they had expected to see tropical fruit, and perhaps guava-jelly.

The "freight" did not have full justice done it, at least by the young ones, for they were so eager to get hold of Mrs. Denison and make her disclose her mystery that they could hardly be persuaded to eat at all.

They were a good deal surprised when she led the way to the barn, and still more when they saw Martha's favorite cat reposing in an old hamper filled with soft hay, while three little squirrels, not more than half grown and so pretty that everybody wanted to get hold of them at once, frisked about freely over the old cat's back, while she looked at them with the indulgent fondness and pride which cats usually bestow only on their own children.

After the oh-ing and ah-ing had subsided a little, and the questions had all been asked, Mrs. Denison proceeded to explain: "You know a few weeks ago old Tabby had three kittens? Well, I didn't tell you, because I knew you'd be just as sorry as I was, what happened to them day before yesterday. We couldn't keep but one, for you know there's three cats besides Tabby now, and Martha chose the white one, but she didn't separate them; she thought she'd wait till Sam was ready to drown the other two; and he thought she'd taken out the one she meant to keep, and he went and drowned the whole three!"

"Oh!" in various tones of horror and regret from the eight.

"I did feel too sorry for that old cat. She went mourning 'round,



"THREE LITTLE SQUIRRELS FRISKED OVER THE CAT'S BACK."

See Page 202.

looking everywhere for them, and wouldn't be comforted, and wouldn't even eat. I didn't know what to do. I went round to the neighbors, till they must have thought I was crazy, trying to borrow a kitten, but it just happened that there wasn't one to be had for love or money. So I gave it up, and tried to comfort Tabby by feeding her, but she'd hardly touch even cream. Yesterday morning, after you'd gone, I told Sam I wished he'd take the old boat and go down to the inlet for some clams and crabs and fish. We hadn't used that old boat all summer, for your father's so kind he's lent one of yours to Sam every time we wanted one; but yesterday, you know, you had 'em all up the river. So I told him he'd have to bale the boat out: it was lying a good piece up the shore, under the trees, you know. He hadn't been gone ten minutes when he came running back all out of breath with something gathered up in his hat. 'Aunt Sally,' says he, 'look what I've found in the old boat!' and there he had those three cunning little squirrels. He said when he jumped in to bale out the boat he saw something he thought was a water-rat creep out of the locker in the stern, where there was a board off, and run along the edge of the boat. He threw a stone at it, of course, boy-like, and by some accident he hit it, and it wasn't till it tumbled over into the water dead that he saw it was a pretty little striped squirrel. So then he looked in the locker, and there, in a nest of leaves and grass, were those three; and, as good luck would have it, he caught them before they had sense enough to run. The minute I saw them I just said, 'There!

there's a new kind of kittens for our old cat;' and, sure enough, when I put them in a box, and then put her in, she me-owed and licked them and went on as if she was cracked for joy, and they cuddled up to her, not the least bit afraid, and seemed to think she was their mother. When I brought 'em out here I put a hen-coop over 'em at first, but they seemed so tame, and the hen-coop worried the old cat so much, that I just gave her the hamper she'd had the kittens in; and she's as happy as a queen."

The adopted children had retained enough of their wild nature to decline entirely the most persuasive offers to pick them up, but after a few days, when they had become accustomed to seeing the children, they became almost as tame as the unfortunate kittens which had resigned in their favor, and the children counted that day lost in which a visit had not been made to this happy family.

When the excitement over this last novelty had somewhat subsided, and Mr. Cheston and Charlie and Dick had been *seen off* for a blue-fishing expedition, various pieces of more or less war-worn fancy-work were produced, and Mrs. Cheston was mildly but firmly requested to "go on with the dove." She suggested that perhaps Charlie and Dick would reproach her, but as all six of her children, and Nelly Heath besides, promised to "give them the *sense* of it" if they desired to hear it, she allowed herself to be persuaded and went on:

"The little dove became for several days the chief object of

thought and conversation among Mr. Forrester's children—among all, that is, excepting Bertie, for Pen had been as good as her word, and laid down the small arms which she had taken up solely under Bertie's influence the morning after her straightforward declaration that she would do so. Cousin Hannah and Ruth took no notice in words of Pen's submission, but the children observed that Cousin Hannah 'switched off' from some tedious preserving and canning to make a batch of gingerbread that day, and Ruth put her arm very tenderly around Pen's square shoulders when that young lady, for the first time, offered her a good-morning kiss as the other two children did.

"Bertie watched it all with bitterness in her heart and on her face. She refused to let Pen take her arm that afternoon when they went to walk, and nothing but the fear of attracting her father's notice held her back from positive rudeness to both Cousin Hannah and Ruth. When we are thoroughly 'out of sorts' and uneasily conscious, underneath all our indignation against other people, that we are ourselves making the false notes which set the whole tune jarring, we are exactly in the state to be taken advantage of by the ever-ready Tempter and drawn on to put into words or open acts the wicked feelings which the grace of God would have enabled us to stamp out if we had but asked for it and then gone to work ourselves. Bertie knew that she was all wrong—that Cousin Hannah and Ruth had not been brought there for a punishment to her, but

because her own unfaithfulness had made it necessary that faithful hands should take her duties. Like many other people, she felt quite equal to being a ruler over many things, without considering that she had not fulfilled the requirement and been faithful over a few things.

“So, when Cousin Hannah’s strong, kind hands took the little fluttering, frightened dove and tenderly bound up the wounded wing—which, to the joy of all, was found to be unbroken—although Bertie fairly ached with pity and interest, and she longed to help, or at least look on, she pretended to be reading so busily as to be quite unconscious of everything but her book; and it did not occur to her that her temper and false pride were leading her into one small deceit after another, and that an acted lie is quite as much a lie as a spoken one is.

“All that day she was obliged, according to the plan she had laid down for herself, to appear indifferent when the other children fluttered around the cage which held the little dove. Alice’s delighted cry of, ‘It’s eating!—Oh, Bertie! dear Bertie! please come and see my little dove eating crumbs!’ was answered by a cold ‘Don’t you see that I am studying my lesson, Alice? I wish you would not make such a fuss about your dove.’

“The child, disappointed, turned eagerly to Ruth for sympathy, and this, in turn, sent another jealous pang through Bertie’s heart.

“The boys had called for the cage early in the day, and

Ruth, by her kind manner and gentle words, had managed to secure a promise to give up the bird business from the one who had wished to spare the dove. The other boy could only be induced to say that he would think about it, but both had promised to call the next day, for Ruth had heard Mr. Forrester say that the strawberry-bed must be weeded, and she promised to ask him to let them have the job.

"Bertie, sitting quietly in the porch, heard the whole conversation, and thought jealously, 'Papa knows whom to get to weed the garden, I should think. She'll be telling him whom he had better ask to dinner next thing.'

"And her jealousy gave her another pinch that evening at the tea-table, for Mr. Forrester entered heartily into Ruth's plan, and said that when the strawberry-bed was weeded, if they had done it well and could bring a written recommendation as to honesty, he could keep them busy picking blackberries and gathering up fallen apples long enough to give them a good start, and convince them that there were other profitable industries besides bird-catching.

"Bertie was in her usual place at the head of the table, for her father, with kind consideration for her feelings, had, when Cousin Hannah first came, privately stipulated that Bertie should continue to 'pour out,' for he knew how much pleasure it gave her, and she had always been careful and attentive in this duty even when she failed in others. But to-night, when she felt choked with

bitter feelings, she was careless of what she was doing. She sent her father his first cup of tea unsweetened, and when he made a wry face at the first taste, and then laughed and asked what he had done that his allowance of sugar was thus suddenly cut off, she said pettishly, 'I'm sure I sweetened it, papa; you didn't half stir it.'

"'Taste it yourself, my little daughter,' said her father gently, handing up his cup; and Bertie, after a vigorous stir, tasted, colored violently, and then put in two such heaping spoonfuls of sugar that the tea was quite as undrinkable as it had been without any.

"Her manner as she again took the cup grieved her father to the heart. He would not reprove her before the assembled family, for he was watching with deep and tender pity the struggle through which she was passing; but when, before tea was over, May answered something he said almost as disrespectfully and pettishly as Bertie had spoken, he felt that he could not let the little ones be influenced for ill without interfering. He had hoped that Bertie's conscience would bring her out of the tangled path which was leading her farther and farther from home; but conscience can be smothered, and Bertie was resolutely smothering hers.

"Her father put his arms around her as they left the tea-table and drew her into the library. He talked to her long and tenderly; he reminded her of her mother's last words, and told her how her

influence and example must lead the children one way or the other, even if they did not mean to follow her; and he asked her, quietly and seriously, what was the cause of all the bitterness and jealousy which she had shown about Cousin Hannah and Ruth.

"Bertie had remained stubbornly silent, but she burst out now with, 'Cousin Hannah has no right here, papa. It was to me that mamma left you and the children and the house, and if you would only have given me another chance I would have done better. I had resolved about it the very evening, the very minute, when Aunt Mary told me of this hateful plan; and you might have let me try again.'

"'My poor little daughter,' said Mr. Forrester gently, 'how many resolutions had you made and broken, and in whose strength were they, and even that last one, made?'

"Bertie did not answer, and Mr. Forrester went on: 'It grieves me to the heart to say what I must say to you, my child, but there is no help for it. Unless you can come to repentance and a better mind after the exhibition of temper which took place to-night at the table, you must give up your charge to Cousin Hannah, at least for the present, for I cannot have the children hurt by your example. You heard how May spoke to me; she would not have done it had she not felt authorized by what you said. Whenever I can feel that it will be right I shall be only too glad—and so, I know, will Cousin Hannah—to welcome you back to your old place; but until I see the change for which I am hoping it must be given up.'

“Bertie turned without a word, and rushed out of the library. Hot anger dried her tears, and, snatching her hat from the rack, she flew down the garden, out of the gate which led to the orchard, and at last threw herself on the soft grass at the foot of a tree. ‘I will not bear it!’ she panted. ‘They have set papa against me, and now nobody cares about me any more. If I knew where to go I would run away.’

“The sound of voices on the other side of the high fence which separated the orchard from a country road made her pause to listen. She heard a voice which she recognized as that of the younger of the two boys who had caught the dove. He was saying stoutly, ‘No, I won’t, and you won’t either: I’ll fight you first. First it was to lie for you, and now it’s to steal for you, and there’s no knowing what it’ll be next. They were kind to us only this morning, and if you put your foot on that fence I’ll raise such a row that they’ll all be out here.’

“‘You daresn’t,’ said the other defiantly.

“‘I dare, then; you’ll see if I don’t,’ answered the first, boldly.

“‘Oh, you’re green; I was only fooling. Come on,’ said the larger boy in a joking tone of voice.

As they passed on Bertie heard the younger boy say doggedly, ‘You’d better not fool quite so much like earnest, then.’

“Bertie had a curious sensation, as if she had been red hot and had been suddenly plunged into cold water. Somehow, the words, ‘There’s no telling what it’ll be next,’ rang in her ears.

Where was she going? What was she doing? Where was all the goodness of which she had felt so sure only a month or two ago when one of the neighbors had told her what a wonderful thing it was for a child of her age to be keeping house for her father and taking such good care of the children? She seemed suddenly to see where she was standing. With a heart full of hatred and jealousy toward two innocent people, who were quietly doing all they could for the comfort and happiness of those whom she had professed to love so dearly, but whose comfort she had selfishly neglected; hardening herself against her father's loving forbearance; injuring her little sisters—whom it was her place to help and encourage in the right way—by the example of her evil temper;—it was a dark record, and she turned from it afraid, but still trying to justify herself, to make herself out the injured one.

"But conscience had been roused, and pointed back to the beginning of trouble—to a night when, annoyed because her father had insisted upon her going to bed at the usual hour, she had taken up with her the book in which she was interested, and read until the striking of one o'clock had frightened her into bed. She had meant to say her prayers in bed, but sleep had overtaken her before they were well begun. She had overslept herself the next morning, postponed her prayers until after breakfast, and been shocked, when she went to bed that night to remember that she had not said them at all. That was the

beginning; from that day careless deeds and omissions of duty had multiplied. 'We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves,' and if we refuse the help which is so freely offered, we are indeed helpless.

"But Bertie's stubborn will still refused to submit and let her make the apology and, so far as she could, the reparation which she felt that she owed. She rose from the grass, which was now wet with dew, thoroughly chilled and crept miserably back to the house and into bed. She had not discontinued the form of saying her prayers, but to-night they seemed to choke her, and she lay down at last with a line out of a poem she had lately read saying itself over in her mind:

'Stand off! she sleeps, and did not pray.'

"She waked in the morning feeling feverish and restless, with a sore throat from lying on the damp grass. It was very early, and the house was so still that she wondered what had wakened her until she heard a plaintive sound from the next room, where May and Alice slept.

"It was the dove, whose cage Alice had carried up the night before that she might see it when she first woke in the morning. If you have ever happened, in a quiet wood, to hear the cooing of a dove, you will not wonder that the tender, mournful sound went to Bertie's heart. To her excited imagination it seemed like the gentle voice of her mother, reproaching, pitying, for-

giving, all at once. She dropped on her knees by the bedside, sobbing out, 'Oh, mamma! mamma! I hope you cannot see what a wicked girl I am; it would make you too unhappy. She cannot hear me! she cannot hear me!'

"Some one lightly crossed the floor; it was Ruth, who, wakened and alarmed by Bertie's sobs, had hastened to see what was the matter. In a moment she was kneeling by the poor child; her kind arms embraced the shivering little figure and her gentle voice whispered, 'No, but the dear Saviour can. He is always ready, always waiting for us to come to Him; we will ask for His help now.'

"Bertie said 'Amen' out of a full heart to Ruth's few words of earnest prayer, and as soon as they rose from their knees she begged Ruth's forgiveness, humbly promising to try to be a different girl.

"Ruth could scarcely wait for her to finish, but took her in her arms, kissing her heartily, and then tucked her up in bed, and dressing hastily, went to call Cousin Hannah, for she saw that Bertie was feeling ill.

"The little girl had taken a heavy cold, and for two or three days Cousin Hannah was kept busy nursing and doctoring; and when Bertie came down stairs again it was a very different Bertie from the one who had last sat at the tea-table before her short illness. There had been long talks with papa in the sick-room; the past was forgiven, and hope and comfort were in the little heart which had

been so full of despair. Cousin Hannah had been made happy by the surrender of that stubborn heart, and felt at last that she could *mother* all the children: it had been a great pain to her to have to leave out one. And Alice met full sympathy now when she turned to Bertie in delight at the 'ways' of the little dove.

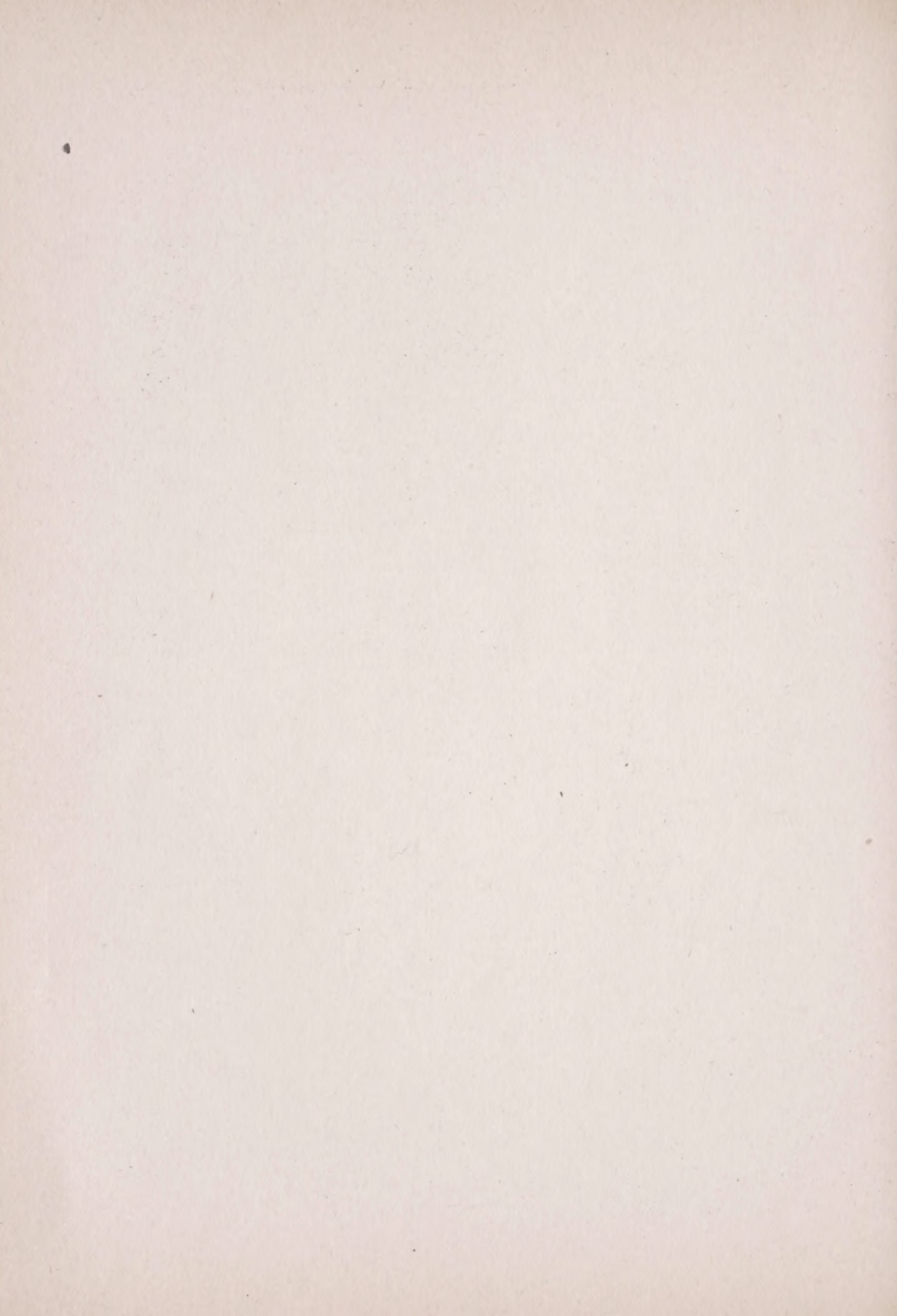


"It had grown quite tame, its wing was nearly well, and the only trouble was that Alice felt as if she ought to give it its freedom. As Bertie watched the gentle creature, so patient in its captivity, she thought that it was no wonder that the Holy Spirit had chosen this form in which to appear; and her heart was filled with grief and



"DICK, ROB, POLLY, AND TOM PICKED INDUSTRIOUSLY,"

See Page 220.



shame as she remembered how she had rebelled against the wholesome restrictions which a father's love had placed upon her, when she saw the gentle submission of the little captive.

"But Alice did not mean to hold her prisoner long. It was a hard struggle to give it up, but she felt that it had a right to its freedom; and one sunny September day a solemn procession marched down the garden with the cage—Ruth, the four little sisters, and a little neighbor-friend, who had also learned to love the dove, and who, while she begged Alice to keep it in the cage, wanted to see what it would do when it was released. Ruth patiently held the cage upon her lap while last looks were taken, new beauties pointed out, and a general lamentation made.

"But lamentations are frequently very useless things, and this one proved particularly so. The dove flew away to the orchard, where it sat all day cooing softly to itself; the next morning and every morning afterward for many weeks it perched on the railing of the piazza, turning its pretty head from side to side while the children scattered crumbs. It flew down to eat the offered breakfast, and hovered between the house and orchard all day. Many a time through that golden autumn did its tender, plaintive voice keep Bertie reminded of her weakness, and the Help which waited to turn it into strength, and she loved to fancy that the soft notes shaped themselves to her mother's last words, 'Love God and papa and little sisters, darling, and live so that you and they may all come safely to the Father's house.'"

"I am *very* glad that they let the dove out," said Kitty with a deep sigh as her mother stopped—"glad for the dove, that is—but it must have been dreadfully hard to let it go. Mamma, was that the 'dove let loose in Eastern skies' that you used to sing about?"

But before mamma could explain that that was an entirely different dove, not related in any way to this one, the shouts of the returning fishermen were heard. They had found the sun so hot and the fish so excessively coy that they had come back in time for dinner, instead of staying all day, as they had at first intended; and when questioned as to the number of blue-fish they had caught they said the fish were entirely too large to bring home, and they had left them in the sea. So, after dinner, a blackberrying expedition was organized, and they all strolled through the wood to the shady lane where, the children asserted, the fruit was "as thick as blackberries." And so it was, but it was a good deal more red than black, and the older people said they found it much pleasanter to sit in the shade under the great trees than to hunt for blackberries which grew about six to the acre. Dick and Rob and Polly and little Tom—who, having put his hat in the river for a boat, and been very much disgusted when the swift current carried it off, was decorated with an old sun-bonnet of Martha's, which, to his further disgust, made him look "like a girl"—picked industriously, although there was no evidence of their industry besides four alarmingly-black tongues and forty equally black fingers. But it was very pleasant just



"THE CHILDREN'S HEARTS WERE SADDENED BY FINDING A DEAD BIRD."

See Page 223.

to be out of doors and be alive. Nobody seemed to care much whether there were blackberries or not. The hearts of the little people were saddened, however, before the afternoon was over by a dead bird which they found under a tree. It was a red-bird, and its brilliant plumage, as it lay among the grass, attracted their attention. There were marks among the pretty feathers which looked very much as if a cat had been the murderer, and Kitty and Polly threatened bread-and-water and imprisonment to Tripod and the other kitten, which, much to Polly's regret, was still nameless.

"No," said Mr. Cheston, "'it is their nature *to*,' as I used to say when I was a small boy. I remember very well," he went on, "how I felt when I first saw a dead bird, although I could not have been more than four years old at the time. My heart was completely broken, and I carried it to my little sister, who was older than I was by several years, and who could do so many things that I could not that I believed she could 'cure' my poor little limp and lifeless bird. She could only cry with me; but she did that, bless her little heart!" and papa looked off into the sunset sky, while Kitty whispered to Polly, "That was our dear little aunt, who died before she was as old as Lina."

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. HEATH'S STORY.



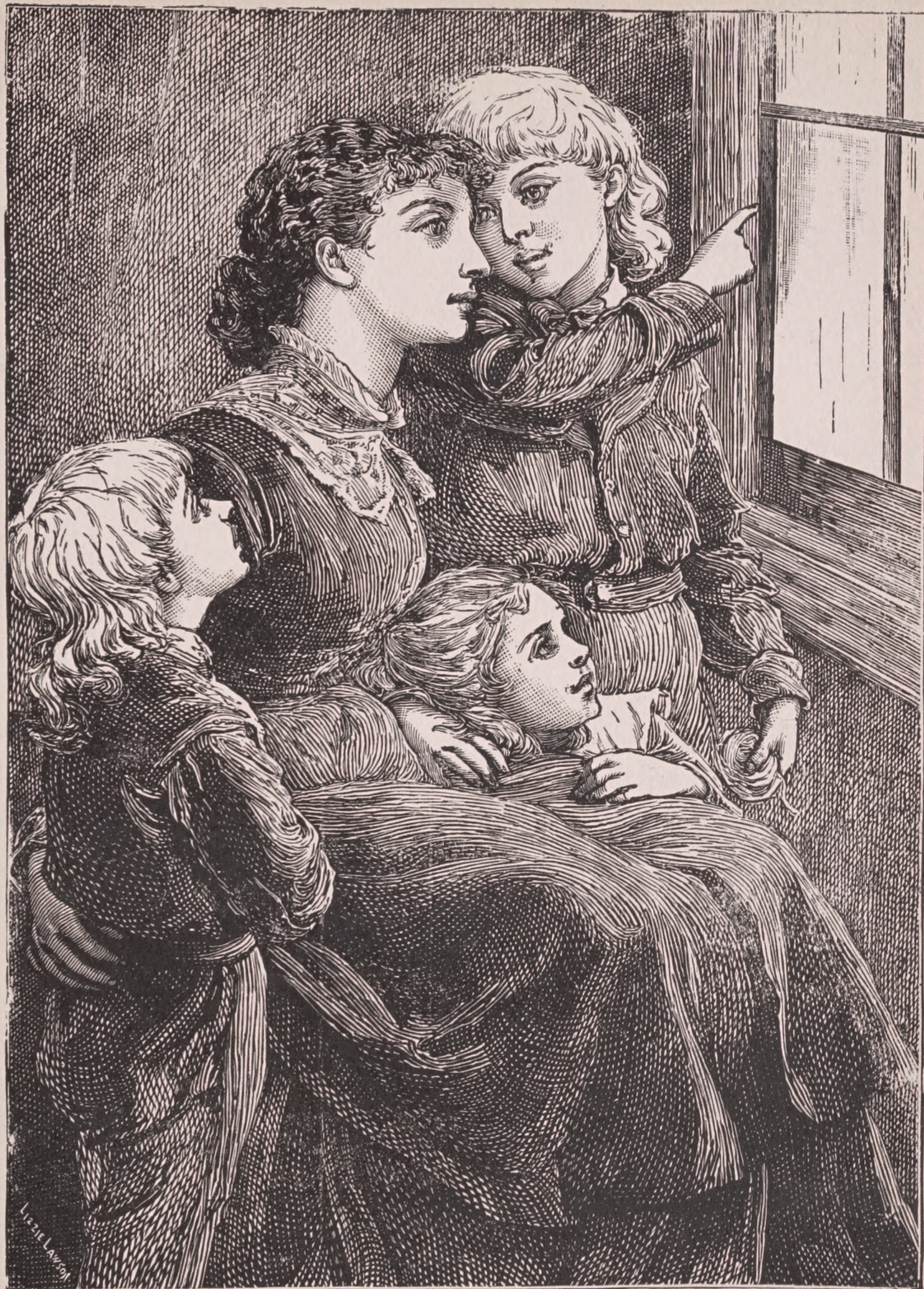
THE time was drawing near when Nelly and her mother must go, and Mrs. Heath had managed, as the children said, "to get out of telling a story" so often that one morning, soon after Mr. Cheston's holiday-week ended, she was surrounded so that escape was impossible, and so touchingly petitioned that she yielded. "But I can only tell you something that I have read," she said; "I never made up a story in my life."

"Of course you didn't," said Kitty; adding virtuously, "Martha says,

'Truth may be blamed,
But a lie will be shamed.'"

Mrs. Heath laughed. "Must my story have a name? The name is often the hardest part of the story to find."

"Oh yes, it must have a name," said Polly, "or there won't be anything to remember it by."



MRS. HEATH RELATING THE STORY OF "EFFIE'S MEMBERSHIP."

"You are very hard taskmasters," said Mrs. Heath. "I shall just tell you the story, and leave you to name it anything you like afterward. It was in one of my books when I was a small girl, and I read it over many times, because it was a favorite one with me, but I have forgotten the name— No, I haven't, either; it has come back to me. But I don't promise to give it word for word, except some verses in it; I think I remember every verse I ever learned. Now, you needn't ask me to recite them all: I see it in your faces. This story is positively my valedictory, for we are going next week, you know, and it is a good long one, and it was called EFFIE'S MEMBERSHIP." And Mrs. Heath thus began her story:

"‘AND every one members one of another,’" repeated Effie, slowly. "I don't quite understand that, mamma. Members—that means arms and legs and head, and it means people of one family; but how can we be ‘members one of another’?"

"I think," said Mrs. Ashton, "that in a sense it means both sorts of members. You know what that hymn of which you are so fond says:

‘Angels, and living saints and dead,
But one communion make:
All join in Christ, their vital Head,
And of His love partake.’

Christ's people are what the body is to the head. He plans and orders and directs for them, and if they truly love Him, they carry

out His designs just as promptly and fully as your feet obey your wishes when you start to go up stairs. You do not stop and think, 'I will move first my right foot, then my left foot, then my right again ;' you just do it 'instinctively,' to use a longish word—that is, from an impulse instead of a plan. And then, taking the other meaning of 'members,' you know when papa, who is the head of the family, plans, according to what he is making, what we can afford to spend, he leaves still a good deal of choice with us as to how we will spend it. You might have had a sealskin muff this winter instead of your plain little gray squirrel, and I might have had a velvet coat instead of a cloth one ; but we both preferred the trip to the seashore with papa."

"Yes, I see what you mean, mamma," answered Effie with great animation. "We all have 'all the time there is,' as somebody or other says, but we may choose how we will spend it. And it is lovely to think that we and everybody are members of one great large family, with the dear Saviour for the Head. Only," she added a little sadly, "I'm afraid we don't always behave as if we were all brothers and sisters. Just for a few minutes last Sunday I felt vexed that those two poor little children came into our pew, and I thought there was plenty of room farther back ; and then all at once I remembered about the 'poor man in mean apparel,' and I felt so ashamed that I could hardly wait until church was out to ask them always to sit there if they liked it."

Effie Ashton was but seven years old, but she was an only child,

and her mother had talked to her and read to her ever since she could remember as if she had been much older than she really was, for Effie had never been strong and her home had been a rather lonely country place. The little girl had a cough which caused her mother and father much anxiety, and at the time of which I am writing they had just decided to go to the south of France for the winter, hoping that the entire change of air and scene, the sea-voyage, and the mild climate might give their child the health and strength which they so earnestly desired for her.

Mr. Ashton, who was one of the partners in a silk-importing house, found that he could obtain an extension of the leave which had been granted him for a journey required by his business; and the whole thing was arranged so suddenly that Effie felt as if she were dreaming and must wake up presently, when she stood on the steamer's deck and watched the shore which seemed to be travelling away so fast. She was quite sure of being awake, however, when a sudden feeling of dizzy sickness, a sort of essence of all the swinging she had ever done, made her thankful to crawl into her berth and shut her eyes; but as the passage was comparatively smooth, she soon recovered, and then the long, bright days on deck were a series of unalloyed delights to her, and she was sorry when the land, which had travelled away from her on one side of the ocean, appeared to be travelling out to meet her on the other.

But when they had once landed delight began again, everything was so strange, so different. The cars which they took to reach

London, instead of being open from end to end, as they are here, were divided into what Effie thought the coziest little compartments she had ever seen. The people, although they spoke English, to be sure, spoke it with a manner and accent very different from what she was accustomed to hear at home, and the landscape through which they were rushing was very unlike anything she had ever seen out of a picture.

They were to make no stay in London, for it was already late in the season, and Effie's father and mother feared the dampness of the English climate for her. She felt very sorry that she might not at least see the Tower and London Bridge and Westminster Abbey, but she was promised at least a week in London on the return journey, when the weather would be warm and perhaps dry.

They went immediately to the railway-station where they were to take the train for Dover, for they had no friends to visit in London and a drizzling, chilly rain was falling. Mr. Ashton had some business to transact, which he expected would occupy him for an hour or two, and Mrs. Ashton had a little shopping to do, chiefly for Effie; so, very reluctantly, they left the little girl at the station, giving her many cautions about staying exactly where they left her, and not allowing herself to be enticed away by anything that any one might say to her.

"But must I stay inside, mamma?" she asked pleadingly. "There is such a nice bench out here, and I could see so many things!"

"It is raining now, dearie," said her mother, "and the air is too damp for you to be outside, even under this roof; but if the sun should come out you may come out too."

Mr. Ashton came back, before he had been gone ten minutes, to lay a queer-looking doll on Effie's lap. "There, my posey!" he said, "I have brought you a little native to take care of and to keep you company. Good-bye once more, and don't be afraid."

"Afraid, papa!" and Effie's brown eyes opened to their widest. "What should I be afraid of?"

"Nothing, to be sure," said papa; and then Effie laughed merrily at the idea of being "afraid of nothing," and so her father left her.

Now, he and her mother had both said that they would be back in two hours at the very latest, and it was ten o'clock by the clock in the station when they went away. The first half hour was a slow one; nobody was in the room but a motherly-looking old woman asleep in a corner, and the rain was falling steadily. But the new doll was so delightfully absurd-looking that Effie tried to draw her picture on a card, and succeeded in making something still more absurd than the doll was. The old lady woke up presently, and talked kindly to the child, telling her of the little grandchildren at home and asking questions about America, until the train for which she was waiting came, and she was whisked off, leaving Effie quite alone.

But just then the sun fairly blazed into the room, and Effie

darted out to the bench; then, remembering the bag and umbrella and heavy shawl which had been left in her care, she darted back, and settled herself once more on the bench with all her responsibilities—the shawl over her arm, the umbrella in the hand which was not occupied in holding the wonderful doll, and the bag close to her feet.

Just then a train whizzed up to the station, and a pleasant-faced guard made a rush for the bag, saying briskly, "Come, little missy, be lively now, or you'll not get this train."

"But I don't wish to get it," said Effie sedately; "I am to stay here until mamma and papa come back."

The guard whistled, but he dropped the bag and looked at Effie with an amused face. "You don't look quite old enough to be travelling alone, that's a fact," he said; "but when are they coming to collect you?"

"At twelve o'clock," she answered, "and I don't mind being alone. There was a dear old lady in the station just now, who talked to me as kindly as if she'd known me always, and I dare say somebody else will be here presently."

"But you had better not be talking with everybody who comes along," said the guard kindly; "you might have your things stolen, you know."

"Oh, I never saw anybody who would do that," said Effie, greatly shocked; "and I don't believe they would," she added, earnestly, "for you know 'we are all members, one of another.'"



"COME, LITTLE MISSY, OR YOU'LL NOT GET THIS TRAIN." See Page 232.

Before the guard could answer her his time was up, and he was whirled off, bowing and smiling to Effie as he went; but the smile left his face when she was out of sight, and he looked puzzled and thoughtful.

“‘Members one of another’!” he repeated to himself. “I learned that, and a good deal more like it, a goodish while ago, but I don’t think I—or anybody else, for that matter—act up to it exactly.”

And everybody who spoke to that particular guard that day wondered at his civility, and the third-class passengers almost believed they were first-class for once in their lives when they were answered instead of being snubbed if they presumed to ask a question.

Meanwhile, Effie sat on. For a while the novelty of all around absorbed her, then she began to feel hungry, and retired to the inside of the station while she fished out of the bag and ate the sandwiches and crackers which her mother had left “in case.”

I mean her to tell her own story, so I will just mention briefly that Mr. and Mrs. Ashton were detained, sorely against their will, but quite unavoidably, until four o’clock, when they nearly knocked each other down rushing up the steps of the station in anxious haste. Visions of Effie crying, being stolen, falling asleep and “catching her death of cold,” had made them equally miserable, and Mr. Ashton laughed in a queer sort of way, and Mrs. Ashton only just did not cry, when they saw their little daugh-

ter sitting tranquilly on the bench in the pleasant sunshine, feeding a disreputable-looking London cat with the last end of the last sandwich.

“Were you frightened, darling?” asked Mrs. Ashton tenderly.

“Just a little bit, mamma,” said Effie, “when it struck one, and you did not come yet; but then I remembered to say ‘Our Father,’ and after that I was sure I was safe, and that you and papa were too; and I tried to remember all the verses I could to make the time go faster; and just as I had come to that one we like so much—about ‘every one members,’ you know—a poor, tired lady with a little baby in her arms, and a little girl not much bigger beside her, sat down here, and the little girl cried for a drink, and I went and got her one. The lady watched my things while I went, for a kind man who got off a train that stopped said that somebody might steal them, and I didn’t believe it, but I thought I ought to be careful—why do you and papa smile at me, mamma?—and then I gave them the rest of my lunch, all but a sandwich that I’d taken a bite out of; and I was so sorry I hadn’t any more, for they were really very hungry, I think; and when their train came the lady kissed me good-bye; and, mamma, she said ‘God bless you, darling!’ Wasn’t that lovely of her?”

“And then an old man who came in dropped a shilling, and we had the greatest hunt for it, but we found it at last, away down in a crack, and I poked it out with my shawl-pin. Then a

pretty young lady left her umbrella, and I only just caught her before she got into the car; and then this poor, thin pussy stole in, and I knew she wouldn't mind my having bitten the sandwich. I coaxed and coaxed her, and she was so frightened, and I only just got her to eat before you came; so it hasn't seemed long at all. But what kept you so much longer than you thought?"

Then Mr. Ashton told how he had been kept because the man whom he was to meet had been an hour later in coming than he should have been, and then had insisted upon talking an hour longer than he should have talked; and after all that a "block" in the street had kept him nearly another hour. And Mrs. Ashton told how she had gone from one store to another in a vain search for the articles which she wanted, and had become so tired and hungry that she had at last stopped for something to eat, thinking she had plenty of time, and wondering that it went so much more slowly than she had been going herself, until she at last discovered that her watch had stopped some time before she had; and then, in her haste to get back, she had missed her way, and had finally to appeal to a friendly policeman for direction.

All of which stories were told as the train carried them to Dover.

I wonder how many of my little friends remember, as Effie did, the membership which binds them to "the whole family in heaven and earth"—how many of them forget themselves and

their troubles and affairs to do the "little things" which go so far toward the happiness of those whom we meet as we pass through "this troublesome world"? Oh, how much less "troublesome" it would be if we could all remember that

"Little things on little wings
Bear little souls to heaven"!

Our whole lives may pass without offering us any opportunity for greatness, but every day, and every hour of the day, brings with it an opportunity for goodness; and the Saviour says sorrowfully of each wasted opportunity, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me."

They spent a delightful winter in the south of France, and Effie's parents had the pleasure of seeing their little daughter grow much stronger; her cough disappeared, if one may speak in that manner of something which is quite invisible, and she spent hours of every day in that best of tonics, the open air. Effie had read an account of "Children's Day" at St. Paul's great cathedral, and was very anxious to witness the beautiful sight and to hear the singing, and Mr. and Mrs. Ashton timed their stay in London so that her wish might be gratified. The anniversary takes place early in June, and they arrived in London and settled themselves comfortably in lodgings the last week in May.

Perhaps some of you have read about this "Children's Day," but for those who have not I will give a brief account of it. The assem-



THE CHILDREN'S DAY.

See Page 238.

blage of children who were clothed and educated in the parochial schools took place for the first time in 1782. That is nearly a hundred years ago, you see; and if any of those children who attended that first meeting are still living, think what very old people they must be now, and how many wonderful changes they have seen since that day.

But every year since then the anniversary has been observed, although there is a large increase in the number of children; and on this day in the early part of June, when Effie for the first time heard the lovely music made by the great organ, the choir of nearly a hundred singers, and the multitude of children's voices, the members of the schools numbered between seven and eight thousand. Can you fancy it? Row after row of little children, the girls all wearing white caps, neckerchiefs, and long-sleeved mittens, placed on raised platforms around the vast nave or open space in the middle of the cathedral, the rows of benches, each tier a little higher than the one in front, gradually rising to more than half the height of the pillars upon which the dome rests! The girls are upon one side, the boys upon the other; the dresses are of different colors, for many schools are represented, and each school has its banner. Then the members of the choir are dressed in white surplices, so you can imagine what a beautiful picture is made when I tell you that sometimes nearly a thousand visitors are admitted besides all this host of children.

Mr. and Mrs. Ashton went early to secure good places, and Effie

did not find the time too long before the service began. She had visited the cathedral once before, but she felt as if countless visits might be made before she would be familiar with all its beauty and wonderfulness, and her eyes wandered from place to place unwearyedly until the children began to file in and take their seats. Then her whole attention was given to them, and she was struck, as she had been many times before in large assemblages of people, with the strangeness of seeing no two faces alike in all that vast crowd.

Each child carried a bunch of flowers, and nearly every one of those little faces looked bright and smiling; but Effie, whose imagination often ran away with her, began trying to fancy histories for them, and to imagine how it must feel to be fed and clothed and taught by public charity, instead of receiving everything from a loving mother and father.

She was too young to have read some verses which an English poet made about this custom. His name was Blake, and he was called the "mad poet;" but whether he was mad or not, he wrote some very beautiful and striking poems, and here is what he wrote about Charity Day at St. Paul's:

"'Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
The children walking two and two, in red and blue and green:
Gray-headed beadles walked before with wands as white as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames' waters flow.

"Oh, what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit, with radiance all their own.

The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs—
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

‘Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among;
Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor.
Then cherish pity lest you drive an angel from your door.’

But if Effie was strongly impressed by the sight of all those “innocent faces,” her excitement went beyond bounds when the first grand strain of music rose from organ, choir, and children. She hid her face on her mother’s shoulder, sobbing quietly, and when Mrs. Ashton, alarmed, whispered, “What is it, darling? Are you ill?” she murmured between her sobs, “No, mamma; but it is so beautiful!”

She grew quieter, however, as the service proceeded, and was able to listen with smiles instead of tears; for it was the unexpected grandeur and beauty of that great volume of harmonious sound that had started the tears, which, after all, were not “sorry tears,” as she explained to her mother when she found her voice.

When the service was over they waited a little while to see the children file out and to allow the crowd to disperse, but this the crowd seemed in no hurry to do. Many were lingering for another look around the cathedral, and many were waiting for the rest to go. So at last Effie’s mother and father, seeing how tired and languid she seemed now that the excitement was

over, began to try to work their way toward the door in the west front. The throng seemed to grow thicker as they advanced, and Mr. Ashton wished to carry Effie, but she laughingly begged to be allowed to walk; so her father gave her his hand, telling her to hold it fast, and on no account to let go until they had made their way out.

But just in the thickest of the crowd a large, rough-looking woman pushed herself between Effie and her father, tearing their hands apart; people came surging between them like the waves of a mighty sea; and before Mr. Ashton could even turn, pressed as he was on all sides, a false alarm was raised that the temporary scaffolding was falling. The alarm was caused by the creaking of one of the supports, against which several people were pressing, and there was no real danger; but anybody who has ever been in a panic-stricken crowd knows how less than senseless and more than helpless even ordinarily sensible and helpful people become. There was a frantic struggle to get out, and many children and some of the weaker women were knocked down and badly hurt.

Among these was Effie. Deprived of the support of her father's hand, she struggled weakly for a little while toward the spot where she had last seen him, but she could see him no longer; the irresistible force of the crowd had borne him on, in spite of all his effort to turn or even to stand firmly in one place. Effie was pushed and hustled so violently that she tried

in vain to keep on her feet; she fell, and before any one could raise her a heavy boot-heel struck her temple, and she knew no more.

She could not tell whether she had been unconscious for hours or days or weeks when at last she faintly opened her eyes. A cool wind seemed to be blowing in her face; a white wagon-cover arched above her, and she felt that the wagon was in motion. Then she found that she was lying on the lap of a stout, tall woman, whose kind face was bent anxiously above her.

"There, my lamb!" said a cheerful voice, heartily, "you're coming round at last; and you need have no fear—you're with those that will take kind care of you."

"But mamma—I want my mamma," moaned the poor little girl; "and papa—he told me not to let go, but indeed I could not help it."

"They're coming, my pretty!" said the woman soothingly; and then the pain shot through Effie's temples and she fainted again.

When she at last revived, and could see and hear plainly, she found herself on a poor, hard bed in a low-ceiled room. The kind-faced woman was standing by the bed with a puny baby in her arms, and Effie smelt a very strong odor of vinegar.

"You'll be all right now, my poor little lady," said the woman kindly; "and as soon as you have your head again you must tell me where to find your papa and mamma—no doubt they're

in a fine fret by this time—and my man will take you home in the morning, for it's too late for him to go back to the city to-day."

"My papa's name is Ashton," said Effie slowly, "and we are lodging— Oh, dear!" and she began to cry bitterly, "I don't know the number, or even the street; I never went out alone, and I did not notice."

"Never you mind that, my dear," said the woman soothingly; "if you've been living in London long the directory will tell."

"But we haven't," said Effie mournfully; "we only came a week or two ago, and we don't know anybody."

The woman turned away as if to lay her baby down, but in reality to hide her troubled face. An impulse of pity had made her offer, when poor Effie had been carried into the street and an officer had been about to take charge of her, in order that the poor little lady should not go to the station-house, to take her home, and when she "came to" and told her name and address she should be at once restored to her parents. The policeman had no right to permit this, and if he had only done his duty Effie would not have been separated from her parents for a day; but the woman looked honest and kind, he did not doubt that a child of Effie's age could tell her address, and so, glad to be saved further trouble, he let her go.

The woman who had, as she thought, befriended Effie was named Griscom, and lived with her husband in a suburb of

London. They were extremely poor, and made a scanty living by peddling vegetables and flowers. Neither one of them could read or write, although they had come of "decent people," and did not associate much with their rough and noisy neighbors. The ignorance of this honest man and woman would be considered strange enough in our country of free schools, but it was not at all strange in England, where so many people grow up without having learned as much as one term at a public school would teach.

John Griscom and his wife lived quietly in a wretchedly small and ruinous house, preferring even that to being thrown, as they must have been in a tenement-house, with rough and disorderly people. They had several children besides the sickly-looking baby, which in spite of Effie's own sorrow excited her pity by its pinched face and wailing cry. But the older children had been "put out" to work as soon as they were large enough for any one to be willing to take them, and were seldom able to come home. John and his wife had a hard struggle to live, for, as his business amounted to little or nothing in winter, they were obliged out of the scanty earnings of the summer to lay by enough to keep them from freezing and starving during the long, cold months of enforced idleness.

But, poor and ignorant as they were, Effie soon found that they had the comfort which is better than any earthly gift: they were simple, humble Christians, and looked forward to a life in that

better country which would "far outpay the hardest labors of the road."

When Effie, worn out with crying, at last consented to be undressed and try to sleep, Mary Griscom, after helping her with a gentle kindness which comforted the little girl far more than she herself knew, said hesitatingly, "And now you'll say the prayer, my dear, which I make no doubt your dear mamma has taught you." And Effie knelt at Mary's knee, and with Mary's rough hand lying gently on her head poured out her grief and her petition for help, and then, not a little comforted, fell asleep almost as soon as her head touched the hard pillow. She did not know until the next day that she had been given the only bed in the house, and that her kind-hearted hosts had slept on a bundle of straw in the low-roofed garret, for the house had but three rooms, two below and one above.

When Effie woke in the morning she looked around bewildered. Everything was clean and neat, but oh, how poor! She remembered in a few minutes, and she could not keep back a burst of tears—more for the trouble which she knew her father and mother were suffering than for her own. Then she lay and thought. Her little life had never known anything but the utmost care and love and comforting; she had been surrounded by mercies which had been such every-day affairs that she had taken them as a matter of course. Now she saw poverty such as she had only read of, and yet this woman did not murmur.

Effie's memory was good, and some verses from the story of Job, which she had read many times, flashed into her mind: "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?"—"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!"

'Yes,' she said softly to herself, "I think I was too selfish; and now I hope I shall always remember and try to help people more. And I will be patient; I *will*. I can cry at night, when nobody can hear me, but in the daytime I will not let them know how sorry I am. And mamma and papa will come by and by, for I shall pray, and I know they will; and I think I will not eat a great deal while I am here, for I am afraid they haven't quite enough for themselves—the little baby looks so thin. And perhaps Mary—he called her Mary—would like me to help her take care of that poor little baby. I'll ask her."

Then Effie got up and began to wash and dress herself. Large girl as she was, it was the first time she had ever tried to do this alone, for being an only child and ill so often had made every one pet and wait on her in a way which would have spoiled a less loving and grateful child; and she was very glad when Mary, hearing her step about the room, came in and offered her help with buttons and strings and tangled hair.

"Would you mind if I called you nurse?" asked Effie. "You look just a little bit like a nice English nurse we had once, and I think I wouldn't feel so lonely."

Mary kissed the sweet little face warmly. "Call me what you please, my poor little dear," she said, "and I will take the best care of you I can until your papa and mamma come for you."

But although Mary spoke as if she thought they might come at any minute, her heart was full of trouble. Neither she nor her husband could write, and, could they have written, they had no money to pay for advertisements, and no faith whatever in the police. Their ignorance on most subjects was very great, and they would have thought themselves very cruel had they "given up to the police" the little stranger who had come within their gate. Yet Mary knew that it was impossible for them to keep her. There were many days when they were stinted for even the coarse food which was all they could buy at any time; and although they might contrive, by extra self-denial, to keep the little girl through the warm weather, it would be utterly out of the question in winter, for it was plain that she had never known hardship in any form.

But day after day went by, and still Mary "had not the heart," as she said to John, to take the "sweet little thing" to a charitable institution, which was the only thing left for her to do. Effie had become very dear to them both. Her gentle, unselfish consideration for them, and her unrepining submission to the hard fare and many privations which were unavoidable, called forth their admiring love every day. And meanwhile, strangely enough, the child grew stronger and more robust in the hard but free life that she now led. No doubt her former guarded and petted life had tended to make

her delicate, and this change, severe and trying as it was, proved a needed correction.

At this thrilling point the tea-bell rang—most inopportunately, the children thought—and they begged Mrs. Heath to remember *exactly* where she left off, and to tell them the rest after tea. But the loveliness of the evening drew everybody down to the river; there was rowing, and of course singing, and when they returned to the house Mrs. Heath declared that she was too tired to say another word that night.



CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. HEATH'S STORY (CONTINUED).



“SOME days must be dark and dreary,” sang Lina, as she came down stairs the next morning, and certainly, if a rainy day were the justification as well as the cause of that “very mournful ballad,” she was fully justified in singing it, for the rain had broken its long truce and was coming down in sheets. But there was an unanimous shout of derision and dissent from the seven, and several of them exclaimed at once, “We’ll catch Mrs. Heath and make her finish the

story; and *we’ll* do everything we couldn’t spare the clear days for.”

An expedition, made as waterproof as possible, was accordingly organized immediately after the delightfully picnicky breakfast, and Mrs. Heath, thus doubly taken by storm, gracefully yielded and continued:

The summer passed, and the first really cold weather forced Mary and John to the much-dreaded decision which they had so often talked over while Effie was asleep; and the little girl was told, with loving caresses and many tears, that owing to their poverty they could no longer keep her with them and must take her to an orphan asylum. Effie knew what that was, for she had visited one one day with her father and mother, and she tried not to cry and to comfort Mary with the suggestion that she could come and see her child there.

"There's one thing comforts me, my lamb," said Mary, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand: "besides that you'll be fed and clothed and cared for there, you'll be taken to the cathedral when 'Children's Day' comes round again; and I can't but feel it in my bones that your dear papa and mamma, knowing that so many of the children in charities are taken there, will make sure to go and seek you among them."

"Oh, do you really think that?" cried Effie joyfully. "Then indeed, dear nurse, you need not mind taking me at all. I shall be thinking of it all the time, and I think I shall like being with all those little girls; it will keep me reminded about our all being members of one great, big family; and you must bring darling little Jenny to see me just as often as you can. Will Baby miss me, dear Baby, darling Baby?" and Effie hid on the baby's shoulder the tears which would come at the thought of leaving her kind protectors and going once more among strangers.

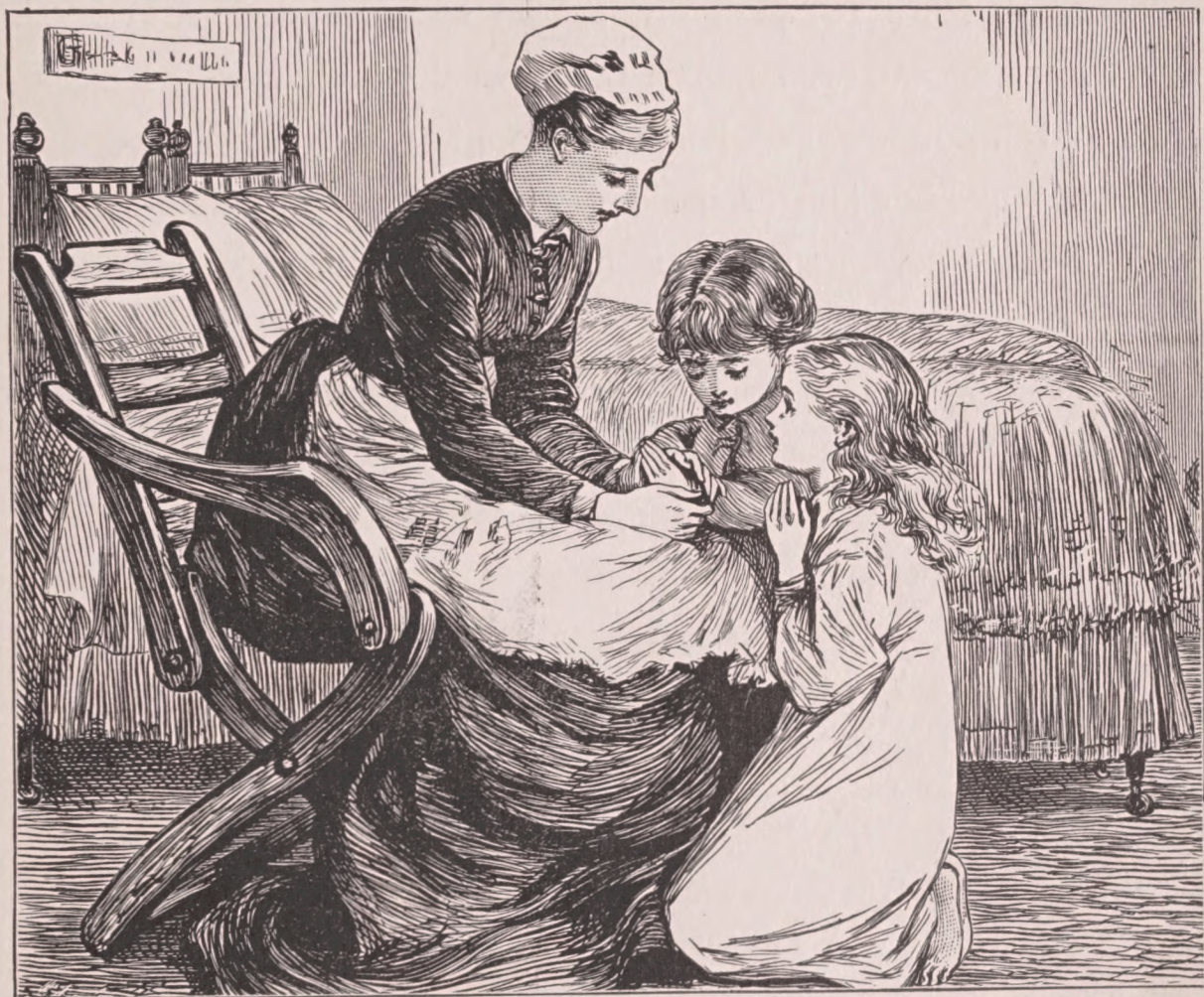
She went submissively, and as cheerfully as she could, to the orphan asylum the next day. John and Mary and the baby all went with her, and it was afternoon when they arrived, for the poor old horse had found his load almost too heavy for him.

Mary made a careful statement of the circumstances to the matron, which was written down, and to which Mary affixed her "mark," as she could not sign her name; and the matron promised to watch the leading newspapers, and to insert an advertisement in one or two of them, giving Effie's present home in case her mother and father should still be in London, though this was not at all probable; and the matron gently reproved Mary for having taken no active steps to find Effie's parents when the child was first lost. But when she understood how utterly destitute and friendless they were she pitied instead of blaming them, and would not let them go until they had eaten a hearty dinner—such a dinner as they had never even seen before.

This matron was a good and gentle woman, and she comforted and soothed Effie when, Mary and John and the baby having at last gone, the child sobbed uncontrollably, feeling more deserted and alone than she had done on the day when she was first lost. The matron saw that Effie had been carefully and delicately brought up, and at first she was tempted to favor and spare her; but when she considered that, should Effie's parents die without having found and claimed her, the child would be obliged to earn her own living, she wisely decided not to interfere in any way with the regulations of

the institution, especially as Effie was now perfectly well and strong, besides being tall and large for her age.

And now it was that Effie found daily more and more comfort in her little Bible and in her prayers, and in her homesick heart took



comfort every night as she knelt with her little bed-fellow at the kind matron's knee and said the prayer which her mother used to hear her say. Many of the children were rough and ignorant and coarse; she was laughed at and plagued for "putting on airs;" and

even the girls who felt and spoke kindly shared none of her feelings and tastes. The tasks she was given were light and easily performed, for the matron saw to it that none of the children were overworked; and being an active little body, she did not grumble at having to learn to wash dishes and sweep and dust, and she worked quickly and well before many weeks had gone.

She did not allow her homesick longing for her father and mother to make her idle or useless, and a poem which her mother used to read to her often came to her mind now. Mrs. Ashton had made Effie her companion in many ways, and had read and repeated to her verses which she herself loved even when they seemed too old for Effie; and these two verses were all Effie could remember of the poem, though she often tried to think of the rest:

“All things of Thee partake;
Nothing can be so mean
That with this tincture, ‘For Thy sake,’
Will not grow fine and clean.

“A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.”

This poem is called “The Elixir,” and you will find it in George Herbert’s works. I wish I could know that every little one who is old enough to read has learned it by heart; it is not very long.

While Effie was humbly doing her duty at the orphan asylum in Westminster road, her mother was lying helpless and ill at Mentone,

but thinking by day and dreaming by night of her little daughter. She had meant never to leave London until her child was found, but the fright and shock of losing Effie, together with repeated colds—for she had gone in all weathers and at all hours with Mr. Ashton in search of her treasure—had finally made her so ill that the great London doctor whom Mr. Ashton had called in had told him very seriously that his wife could not endure the London winter, and that if he wished to save her life he must take her to a warmer climate. So, sadly against their will, they left London, fearing, since every effort to find their child had been in vain, that she must have died from injuries received in the cathedral or have been taken to some distant place to which they could obtain no clew.

Still, they could not give up all hope. Although they had ascertained positively, before leaving London, that Effie was in none of the charitable institutions of the city, Mrs. Ashton thought that many things could happen which would cause her to be placed in one eventually; and she longed for spring and returning health that she might go back to London and begin the search anew.

Mr. Ashton, unable to be absent from his business any longer, had been obliged to return to America after seeing his wife comfortably settled in Mentone for the winter and providing her with a kind and faithful attendant. He arranged to meet her in London the following May, when, if all search for Effie should again prove unsuccessful, they would return home in the fall.

But Mrs. Ashton would not allow herself to think of this possi-

bility. She planned for Effie continually during the long, wakeful hours when coughing and fever deprived her of the little sleep which anxiety would have left her; and when at last she began to grow better and to walk out once more, scarcely a day passed that she did not bring home some trifle "for Effie." I need not tell you how fervently she prayed that her child might be given back to her, trying all the time to feel that she could be resigned to God's will should her prayer not be granted, for she knew how blindly we are all walking, and that all our prayers are worthless if we cannot add, "Thy will be done."

So the winter passed slowly away to Effie's mother, as it did to her, for Mary had guessed rightly in regard to "Children's Day." Mrs. Ashton was looking forward to it with an impatient longing, for she hoped that among the hundreds of children's faces which would throng the dome of St. Paul's she should find that one little face which was all the world to her. She felt sure of finding it if it should be there; she thought that she would know if Effie were near even though she herself should be blind and deaf and dumb.

She was startled and shocked by a passage in one of her husband's letters about the middle of the winter. "Did you see by the paper which I sent you the other day," he wrote, "that the steamer on which we had taken passage last fall has not yet been heard from, and that every one now has given her up for lost, with all on board? Dear wife, if our little daughter should be restored to us, as I still hope and pray that she may be, how shall we give

thanks that we were saved, even by this hard measure, from a dreadful death!" Mrs. Ashton tried hard to be a patient and submissive invalid, and not to retard her recovery by fretting or imprudence; and as spring came on her health improved rapidly, so that when she at last left Mentone for London she felt quite as strong and well as she had been before her illness—a fact which gave Mr. Ashton such heartfelt pleasure when he met her that he took fresh courage about Effie. They reached London on the last day of May, rather later than they had intended, but business had detained Mr. Ashton, and he, fearing that his wife would not be equal by herself to endure the painful associations of the city where her grief had been so great a year before, had telegraphed to her to wait and not come until the day on which he expected to arrive. This had been a disappointment to Mrs. Ashton, for Wednesday was the first of June that year, and so the "Children's Day," which, you know, is always the first Thursday in June, was the second, and she wished to run no risk of not being in time for the festival.

However, nothing further happened to detain either of them, and there was still a day to spare. This day Mr. Ashton insisted should be spent by his wife in perfect quietness, that she might be able to go through with the fatigue and excitement, and, as he greatly feared, the disappointment of the day which was to follow. He himself spent the day in taking advertisements of their loss to the leading papers, and in visiting as many of the orphanages

and refuges as he could in so short a time; but as, necessarily, he was detained for some time in each one, he could only go to two or three, and neither of these was the one where he would have found Effie.

As the hour for the morning service approached he tried to persuade his wife to remain at home and let him go alone. He feared the effect of the music, always so touching, of those hundreds of childish voices on her excited nerves; but she seemed so distressed at the bare idea of giving up this opportunity, to which she had so long looked forward, that he ceased to oppose her, and they went early, that they might be seated before the children came in. But they had not realized that at the distance from the children where their seats were placed they could scarcely distinguish faces at all, and that the uniform which the children wore made this still more difficult to do.

As the first strain of triumphant music rose from the children's lips, Mrs. Ashton cried far more bitterly than Effie had cried a year before; the sweetness of the childish treble seemed more than she could bear. But she struggled hard to regain at least outward quietness, and finally succeeded, and then, with the powerful opera-glass which she had brought for the purpose, she patiently examined the little faces, row after row. She thought, afterward, that Effie's face must have been among the number that she scrutinized, but the little girl, whom she had last seen pale and delicate-looking, had grown plump and rosy; her

complexion had become coarser by exposure to all weathers: and her hair, which her mother had so carefully curled every morning, was tucked away under the quaint little cap, and her mother could not see the curly locks which had crept out at the back.

Still hoping against hope, Mrs. Ashton sat still, determined to stay until the end of the service, and then station herself at one door, while Mr. Ashton stood at another, and look closely at every little face as it passed out.

But of this there was no need. In the hush following one of the grand anthems a child's voice rang through the dome, "Mother! father! oh, mother!" and the girls who stood near Effie, turning hastily to see who had dared to call out at such a time and in such a place as this, saw little Effie, standing pale and motionless, grasping with both hands the hand of the tall girl who stood beside her, and who, in spite of her surprise, kept her eyes demurely fixed upon the choir-leader with an expression which showed that she felt that the eyes of England were upon her.

Effie's flowers had fallen at her feet, and when the old beadle, looking at her severely, had picked them up and put them in her hand with a whispered reproof, she began to cry quietly, and whispered to him, "Oh, sir! oh, please! My mother and father are there, but they do not see me, and if they go away I am afraid I shall never see them again."

The little girl who stood next to Effie on the other side explained hurriedly to the beadle, "She's at my school, please, sir, and she's been lost a year; and if she sees her people you'd best go and tell them."

So, Effie, controlling herself by a mighty effort, made him understand where her father and mother were, describing and directing until she was sure he knew. And indeed he had no trouble in finding them at all, for Mrs. Ashton had fainted when she heard that cry; and when he reached her her husband had just succeeded in persuading the crowd to part enough to let him through, and was making his way to the door with his wife in his arms.

It was in the beautiful library of the cathedral that Effie met once more the dear mother and father whom she had feared she should never see again in this world. The beadle had conducted Mr. and Mrs. Ashton there, that they might be free from the crowd and alone with their little daughter, whom he quietly brought to them as soon as Mrs. Ashton had recovered from her faintness.

I cannot tell you much about that meeting, but perhaps you can imagine it; and you will believe that no more joyful and thankful hearts beat in London that night than those of Effie and her mother and father.

They went the next day to the orphanage from which Effie had been so suddenly taken to explain things to the kind ma-

tron; and nothing would satisfy Mrs. Ashton but the promise that she might be permitted to give the children a whole holiday and a feast of as much fruit and wholesome cake as they could comfortably eat.

The matron had taken the address of Mary and John Griscom, and more than one visit was paid by Effie and her parents to the kind-hearted people who had taken the child to a safe shelter; and no word was ever spoken to make Mary and John feel that, had their intelligence been equal to their kindness, Effie probably would have been restored to her mother and father the day after she was lost.

It distressed Mr. and Mrs. Ashton to think that these good people had no prospect before them but a life of privation and toil, and death in an almshouse, and they easily persuaded Mary and John that in America, with steady work and good wages, they could make provision for their old age and live in comfort in the mean time. But when Mr. Ashton proposed to pay their passage, saying that their goodness to Effie would more than cancel the debt, he met with a civil but determined refusal; and it was only after he had convinced them that they could easily work out their debt to him within a year, and make a living besides, that they yielded. If you should go to see Effie you would be sure to be introduced to them, for John is Mr. Ashton's gardener now, and Mary is laundress, and two more honest and faithful servants than they are would be hard to find.

When Effie heard of the loss of the ship in which they were to have sailed a year before she said, with the simple faith which had sustained her in all her troubles, "Mamma, if we could only see, don't you suppose it is that way always? It seems like that verse, 'God having prepared some better thing for them.' And do you remember what you told me a year ago about that great painter who was painting pictures in the dome of St. Paul's, and who was just going to step backward off the scaffold when his friend smeared his picture with the brush and made him rush forward? You know he was not angry when he heard the reason, though he would have been very angry indeed if he had never found it out; but we know we can trust our Father never to make a mistake."

Mrs. Heath stopped, and the children began: "But that isn't all?" "We want to know what became of her after she got home;" "And of John and Mary;" "And—"

Mrs. Heath covered her ears with her hands, laughing, and retreated toward the door, saying, "You ungrateful creatures! The story is done, and I get no thanks at all—only questions to answer which would be to tell another."

Then the chorus changed its tune: "We're *ever* so much obliged, *dear* Mrs. Heath;" "It was a lovely story;" "You can tell us the rest another time, you know."

But Mrs. Heath was gone.

So was Polly's kitten, the unfortunate kitten which had no name. Nothing in the way of a name which had been suggested to Polly had seemed to her to be good enough for such an uncommonly intelligent and affectionate kitten; and the suggestions had been many and various. So now, when this nameless creature had disappeared—it had not been seen for at least two hours—the children all told her that it was useless for her to ask them to help hunt for a kitten which couldn't be called.

"But it can," said Polly, half crying. "I've been calling her 'Kitty' till I find a real name for her, and she comes just as if it was her real name."

They laughed at this, but everybody had something very important to do just then, Nelly was going so soon, and they had so much to show her and do with her yet. Little Tom, alone of the seven, took Polly's hand, and said protectingly, "*I'll* take care of you, my Polly, and keep the cows off, and when we find Kitten we'll give her a great big name: I'll dream her a name."

So Polly and Tom went off, hand in hand, down the lane, for Lina and Nelly were absorbed with the hammock which they were just finishing, and which Nelly was to take with her; Charlie was reading aloud to them; and the rest, engaged with various works, such as making thistle-balls, drying flowers in sand, and whittling, were listening to the reading.

But Lina, who had grown much more thoughtful during this summer of unusual responsibility, had an uneasy consciousness

that she was neglecting her duty, for she knew her mother felt quite at ease about the little ones, believing them to be under her care. So, although they had come to a very interesting part of the story, she threw down her netting-needle, and telling them to go on without her, she would catch up with them afterward, she ran



down the lane, feeling a little uneasy, for Polly and Tom were already out of sight. She was not made any less uneasy by hearing one of Polly's high little screams, and as she turned from the lane, which was hedged with a thicket of wild rose-bushes, into the field, she saw Polly standing so as to protect Tom, while just beyond them a "terrible cow" stood with raised head, lowing at the top

of her voice, but not offering any further intimation of danger. A wave of Lina's hands and an energetic "Shoo!" decided the old lady to start for the other end of the field, and Polly, half sobbing and half laughing, flew to Lina and caught her hand.

"She howled at Tom first," said Polly when she had recovered her voice, "and I thought she would toss him with her horns next; so I got between them and screamed; and then she howled at me for screaming; and if you hadn't come and shoo'd her away, sister, I do suppose she'd have picked us up, one on each horn."

"You little goose!" said Lina, trying to laugh: "it's old Red—you were milking her, or thinking you milked her, only last night—and she's as gentle as a lamb. They took her calf away this morning, and that's what makes her 'howl' so, poor thing! But it was very good of you to get between her and Tom when you were so afraid—better than I was, for I oughtn't to have let you go off alone. But come, we'll look for that nameless kitten now till we find her. I think it very likely she has gone to the cottage: I saw her eating out of the little pugs' plate only yesterday."

Lina had led them on as she talked, until now they were nearly at the cottage, when Tom, who had been quite silent throughout the whole proceeding, suddenly said with great gravity, "I would have got in front of Polly, but I hadn't time."

Lina and Polly laughed so at this speech that Tom put up his lip for a little cry, but just then they heard a pleasant, childish voice saying, "And if you would not wander from home, then my dog

would not chase you. I know who you are: I have seen you with the dear little children at the farm."

They looked over the gate, and there, by the open door, stood a bright-faced little girl with the nameless kitten on her shoulder, and a beautiful hunting-dog watching it jealously as he stood in front of her panting.

Lina did not hesitate to go in, for her mother and Mrs. Heath had called upon the old gentleman's wife, and found her so pleasant and kind, and so anxious to have the children visit her, that permission had been given them to do so.

The little girl came forward, smiling brightly. "You are Lina," she said, "and this is Polly, and that is Tom, and I am Katrine. My dear uncle and aunt have told me about you, and I am so glad you are here! I am come to stay a month, and although I love the dear uncle and aunt much, I miss my brother and sister; so you will let me play sometimes with you, will you not?"

Lina and Polly gave a cordial assent; the kitten made plenty to talk of until they felt quite like old friends; then they branched off to the dog, which little Katrine told them belonged to her, and had come with her the day before. She said that her dog's name was Bismarck, and that he had already made friends with Dandy, but that the pugs would have nothing to do with him, while he growled whenever he saw them.

She joyfully consented to "help take the kitten," which still clung to her shoulder, back to the farm; and when Polly confided to her



"THERE STOOD A GIRL WITH THE KITTEN ON HER SHOULDER."

See Page 268.

the trouble about the name she laughed merrily, and said, "I think my name would be a very good name for her; then you could still call her by the name which she already knows for a—a nickname; is that not what you say?"

Polly was so delighted with this proposal that she adopted it immediately; and the curious part of it was that that kitten never knew her name was changed at all!

The acquaintance with little Katrine proved a great pleasure to the children, and served somewhat to console them for Nelly's loss when she went, soon after Katrine was discovered. It did not make up to Lina for it, for Nelly was about Lina's age, and they were congenial in many ways. But if the old German lady really did pine for the society of children when she first came to Clover Beach, Mr. Cheston said she probably "pined the other way" before the summer was over. A day rarely passed without her receiving calls varying in frequency and in the number of callers at a time—from one to eight. But no number of calls or callers seemed able to exhaust her supply of sugar-cake and good-temper, until Mrs. Denison declared herself jealous, and threatened to stop making cookies. As nobody in all their experience had ever equalled Mrs. Denison as a cooky-maker, this threat called forth a flattering demonstration of regard.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PERHAPS THAT CAME TRUE, ANOTHER STORY, AND THE END.



THE *perhapses* do not always come true, either the pleasant or the unpleasant ones, but Mr. Cheston's "perhaps" about the island actually did come to be fulfilled, rather to the surprise of every one.

The longer vacation which he took in September and part of October was not such a festive occasion as the holiday week had been, for he was tired and needed rest. The summer days in town had been warm, his business cares had been heavy, and when he arrived on the Saturday which began his three weeks' holiday he threw himself into a hammock and announced his intention of spending the whole three weeks in it. As the sweet, bracing air revived and strengthened him, however, he changed his mind, and took the children fishing or rowing or for a long country ramble often enough to satisfy much more exacting people than they were.

So they thought he was giving them very good measure indeed when he announced, one lovely September afternoon, that if the weather "held" until the next day, and mamma would give her consent, they would spend a day and night on the island. Of course mamma consented, the weather held, "and more too," they said, for the next day was even warmer, and the happy party, consisting of Mr. Cheston, Lina, Nora, Charlie, and Dick, rowed off with the tent—which they had cheerfully uprooted for the occasion—shawls, old blankets, provisions, and matches.

You have all been to the island before, so I will not go over it again with you, but will merely mention the sad fact that Lina and Nora privately agreed that the sleeping part of it was a snare and a delusion: no amount of pine-boughs and blankets were equal to a mattress, and there was a feeling of insecurity about the roof which was not soothing every time a puff of wind shook the canvas. But the expedition, taken as a whole, was charming, and they were always glad, after it was safely over, that they really had "camped out."

Meantime the small stay-at-homes had coaxed their mother to "make up to them for not going" by a long ramble in the wood, and, while they rested under the trees, she told them the following story:

"When I was about eight years old, and my little brother and sister were about six and four, my father was obliged to take a

long journey on business, and had not time to make any arrangement for mother and ourselves, such as he would have liked to make, about leaving us in a less lonely place than the house in which we were then living. It was an old farm-house, about a mile from a country village and at least a quarter of a mile from the nearest house. He had rented it for the summer, and the fall had been so pleasant and 'open,' as the country people say, that we had lingered on until now it was November, and no arrangement had yet been made for our winter home. The weather when he went was still bright and pleasant, but within a day or two it changed, and after one or two days and nights of hard frost it moderated and a heavy snow fell. We had but one servant at the time, a faithful middle-aged woman who had lived with mother for several years, and our only other protector was a large Newfoundland dog.

"The day after the snow fell Betty, the servant, slipped on the ice by the kitchen-door and broke her arm and collar-bone. It was late in the afternoon, and it was not likely that any of the neighbors would pass before night. With great difficulty mother succeeded in getting poor Betty into the house, and then she told me that I would have to go to our nearest neighbor and ask him to go for the doctor. She bundled me up warmly, and I set out cheerfully enough, for it was not very far, and I liked the fun of walking through the snow, which in some places was quite deep. But there was a bitter north wind which almost

drew tears from my eyes, the snow clogged my boots after a while, and the fun began to be earnest.

“As I came near the house to which I was going I noticed that none of the men were about the barn; a little boy not much



older than myself, was standing by the fence looking wistfully up the road. I knew him slightly, for he had been to our house on errands once or twice.

“‘I want to see your father, Jack,’ I said; ‘our Betty’s broken her arm, and has to have the doctor.’

“‘Now, that’s too bad!’ said Jack, sympathizingly. ‘Our folks are all gone to the vandoo, and they left me home to look after granny.’

“I did not suggest to him that ‘granny’ was not very much better off by this arrangement so long as he stayed out of doors.



I knew I had no time to waste, so I said good-bye and pushed on for the next house. I felt much encouraged when I saw, from some distance, that the kitchen-door was open and that a bright fire was blazing within. A little girl, who had been my favorite playmate during the summer, stood at the door scatter-



ing crumbs to the half-frozen birds, which, made tame by hunger, hopped close to her feet.

“‘Oh, Susy,’ I called as soon as I was near enough, ‘I’m so glad you’re at home! Will you ask your father to go right off for the doctor? Betty’s broken her arm.’

“‘Oh dear!’ said Susy, half crying; ‘our folks are every one gone to the sale, and won’t be home till dark. They wouldn’t take me because I had a cold, and I’m so lonesome; and when I saw you I just jumped for joy. What in the world will you do?’

“‘Go on to the next place,’ I said forlornly, for I was tired now, and the next place seemed a good way off. ‘You’d better go in, Susy; you’ll catch more cold. Good-bye.’

“‘Dear me!’ said Susy; ‘I never thought of that. Good-bye, Nelly. I’m *so* sorry about poor Betty, and you too!’

“I pushed on, but before I reached the next farm my heart leaped for joy as I saw several boys skating on a pond not far from the road. I made my way somehow over the fence and through a snowy field to the edge of the pond. Three bright, eager-looking little fellows were racing ahead, while a fourth, a dull-looking boy, came slowly and timidly some distance behind them. I called as loud as I could, but it was some time before I could make them hear; then the three foremost boys wheeled up to the bank, touching their little round caps politely.

“I stated my trouble in a few words, and asked if one of them would be willing to go for the doctor for me. They looked at each other silently for a minute, and then one spoke. ‘I’m sorry,’ he said, ‘but my mother told me to come home before dark, and it’s ’most dark now.’ ‘So did mine,’ murmured the next; and ‘So did my father,’ said the last; and, touching their caps once more, they skated gracefully away up the pond.

“I was turning away, almost crying, when the fourth little boy, whom I had scarcely noticed, clumsily made his way to where I was standing and said bashfully, ‘What was it you wanted, little gal?’



"I SAW SEVERAL BOYS SKATING ON A POND."

See Page 278.

"I objected to being called 'little gal,' but the boy's face, though stupid, was kind, and he seemed in earnest.

" 'I wanted somebody to go for the doctor,' I said in a trembling voice, 'but those boys—' And I stopped suddenly, feeling as if my heart had come up in my throat.

" 'Now don't you cry, sissy,' said my new little friend, so kindly that I almost forgave him for calling me 'sissy.' 'Just tell me which doctor it is and where he's to go, and I'll fetch him, and you can go home and get warm.'

"I gave him the directions he asked for, and then I could not help adding, 'I think you're the very nicest boy that ever lived, and if you'll come to see me I'll give you my very best picture-book.'

" 'Will you, really?' he said, his dull face brightening; 'are you in earnest?'

" 'Of course I'm in earnest,' I cried; 'you come and you'll see;' and, exchanging cordial good-byes, we ran off in opposite directions.

"But, alas! in crossing a little foot-bridge over a stream my foot slipped through a treacherous hole which the snow had covered, and I sank down, a helpless little heap, with a sprained ankle. Then, indeed, I cried bitterly, but I had not been crying long when I heard a deep-toned bark, and there, to my great joy, was old Watch, the Newfoundland, dragging half of his broken chain. I put my arms round his shaggy neck, and he

licked my face, and then, to my consternation, bounded away; and no calling could bring him back, or even stop him. I gave myself up to die then, and thought that if any more snow should fall they would probably not find me until spring. I tried to think how father and mother would feel, and how Watch's conscience would reproach him for having left me, when I heard his joyful bark once more, and then I saw mother coming hastily along the snowy road, with one of the farmers who had been to the 'voodoo.'

"He carried me home in his strong arms, and after I had been rubbed and given hot catnip tea, and wrapped in a blanket and set before the fire to toast, mother told me about Watch. He had seemed very uneasy as soon as I left, barking and whining; but mother had taken no notice of him until, looking anxiously out of the window for me and for the doctor, she saw his broken chain hanging to the kennel, and knew that he had escaped. Not long afterward she heard him scratching and whining at the kitchen-door, and on being let in he acted so singularly that he made her understand that he wished her to follow him. She was much alarmed about me by this time; so, tying her two little children to a heavy table at a safe distance from the fire, she followed Watch, fortunately meeting on the way some of her neighbors, one of whom kindly offered to go with her. We found the doctor at the house when we returned; he set Betty's leg, and said no harm had been done by the delay, except to me.



"ON BEING LET IN HE ACTED SINGULARLY."

See Page 282,

I had a sharp attack of inflammatory rheumatism in consequence of the long exposure to cold, and my new little friend came almost daily to inquire about me. When my father—to whom mother had written all about everything—came home he brought books to the kind-hearted boy who had helped us out of our trouble, which made the dull eyes sparkle with delight, and entirely eclipsed the picture-book which, true to my word, I had given him. But I liked him best of all when, turning from his new treasures to me, he said shyly, ‘I’ll like the first one best, though, because it was yours, and because it was the first present I ever had.’”

“Then he never could have had any Christmases,” said Kitty pityingly, when she found the story was done.

“We gave him a Christmas that year,” said her mother, smiling, “which I don’t believe he ever forgot.”

“Oh, please tell us about it,” said two or three of those insatiable people at once.

“Do you see where the sun ‘is?’” said Mrs. Cheston: “that means that the tea-bell will ring or the horn will sound in about half an hour; so it is high time we began to go home.”

And when they found that Mrs. Denison had put raisins in the gingerbread, and a little bouquet at each plate for their further consolation, they were very glad they had not kept tea waiting.

Perhaps you will think that after the camping-out was over

the family felt as if Clover Beach were exhausted, at least for that season. Not at all! Some new delight, or some new way of using an old one, was discovered every day, and there was a very general and sore lamentation when the time for packing up and returning to the city quarters came. Lessons were resumed when the school-year began, but that only made the play-time more precious, and the bracing October weather made every one feel more than ever inclined for long walks and boating-parties and games of croquet; and when the wood-fire sparkled in the evening on the wide, old-fashioned hearth, there was the fun of roasting chestnuts and making walnut candy.

A few gentle words from their mother had made them all anxious to lighten in every way which was possible to little hearts and hands the care which had brought such a tired look into the dear father's eyes. And it is surprising how much *is* possible to willing hearts and hands, be they ever so small. When the little ones stopped disputing over trifles because it "worried papa;" when Lina put down her drawing to take Kitty and Polly and Tom from a noisy game of "tag" for a walk, because her father looked tired, and she thought if everything were quiet he might take a nap; when Charlie took a long hot walk to surprise his father with a new straw hat in place of the one which had blown into the river; when Dick, who hated to read aloud, offered to read the paper to his father every day to save his eyes; and when Nora, who, if possible, hated sewing more than Dick hated read-

ing aloud, offered to mend three or four pairs of gloves which he had brought with him in various stages of decline,—then the tired father felt new strength come into his heart: the battle of life, which is so hard, so desperate when courage fails, seemed an easy thing to him, for he was fighting it not only for those whom he loved, but for those who loved him.

My little people whom I have followed through all these pages are just beginning this battle. But I think they are beginning in a way which, if followed, makes the victory sure. They will not be gloomy or grave because they have enlisted under the flag of that great Leader who asks their allegiance that he may give them His protection, “strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, *with joyfulness.*”



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00024766330